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Brand in the Caribbean:
A Cultural Analysis of the Regional
Creative Economy

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Creative Industries

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List of Abbreviations

CARICOM	The Caribbean Community
CISAC	The International Confederation of Authors and Composers Societies
Creative TT	Trinidad and Tobago Creative Industries Company
CRNM	Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery
CTO	Caribbean Tourism Organisation
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
JIPO	Jamaica Intellectual Property Office
JTB	Jamaica Tourist Board
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization
SELA	El Sistema Económico Latinoamericano y del Caribe

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Declaration

The material presented in this thesis is the author's own work and has not been previously submitted to any institution for publication.

Abstract

The Caribbean's creative industries have contributed significantly to the global creative economy having crafted numerous musical genres, birthed countless Nobel laureates and award winning artists, as well as creating the blueprint for the many Caribbean festivals that take place worldwide. Still, despite its successes, the region has yet to realise its full potential. This thesis argues that brand plays a critical and strategic role in cultural production, distribution and consumption, and that it can ultimately further the development of the Caribbean's creative economy. Focusing on three of the region's core creative industries – music, festivals and fashion – the thesis uses data gathered from qualitative interviews and document analysis in order to gain a deeper understanding of 'brand', its uses and its influence within the regional economy. The thesis explores the dominant definitions of brand, the process of brand building, the role of the 'metabrand', as well as various themes intrinsic to these, including creativity, value and authenticity. This thesis also explores the concept of Brand Caribbean, by first defining its core features and then examining its relationship with national brands and cultural identities. The thesis also examines the region's current role within the global creative marketplace, as well as the challenges that currently impede its growth. This newfound understanding of both brand and Brand Caribbean offers a new sociocultural framework within which to evaluate the regional creative economy, and also presents new avenues for the region to negotiate a stronger position within the global market.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Research background

This thesis explores brand as a dimension of the Caribbean's creative economy. It is therefore essential to first lay the groundwork and introduce this economy and the industries that form it. The creative economy "is an emerging concept dealing with the interface between creativity, culture, economics and technology in a contemporary world dominated by images, sounds, texts and symbols" (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2013). A young field, compared with other academic disciplines, it evolved out of discourse around arts, creative industries and creative cities (Landry and Bianchini, 1995; DCMS, 1998) and gained wider popularity following the publication of John Howkins' seminal text *The Creative Economy: How people make money from ideas* (2001). It has since continued to be at the centre of numerous debates regarding structure, governance, geography, economic systems, political economies, policy frameworks, labour and socio-cultural discourse (Caves, 2000; Flew and Cunningham, 2010; Florida, 2012; Hesmondhalgh, 2009; O'Connor, 2010; Pratt, 2012, Throsby, 2001). In fact, to date even the term 'creative economy' still proves problematic for some academics, however given the limited aims of this thesis it will be used as it the term favoured by Caribbean industry stakeholders, policy makers and academics alike.

This creative economy is built around what is now more popularly referred to as the cultural and creative industries (CCIs).¹ According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the CCIs are "sectors of organised activity whose principal purpose is the production or reproduction, promotion, distribution and/or commercialisation of goods, services and activities of a cultural, artistic or heritage-related nature" (UNESCO,

¹ It is important to note that while the terms 'cultural industries' and 'creative industries' each have their own complex histories, they are often used jointly and in some cases interchangeably. However this thesis will use 'creative industries' since this term is most often used in contemporary regional research.

2016a). Still, in academic and professional circles much contention continues to surround the discussion around which sectors can be classified as creative industries. At the centre of this debate are various industry models of the creative industries including the United Kingdom's Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) model (Department of Culture Media and Sport, 2001), the symbolic texts model (Hesmondhalgh, 2013), the concentric circle models (Throsby, 2001) and the World Intellectual Property Organisation copyright model (WIPO, 2015) all of which use different metrics and classification.²

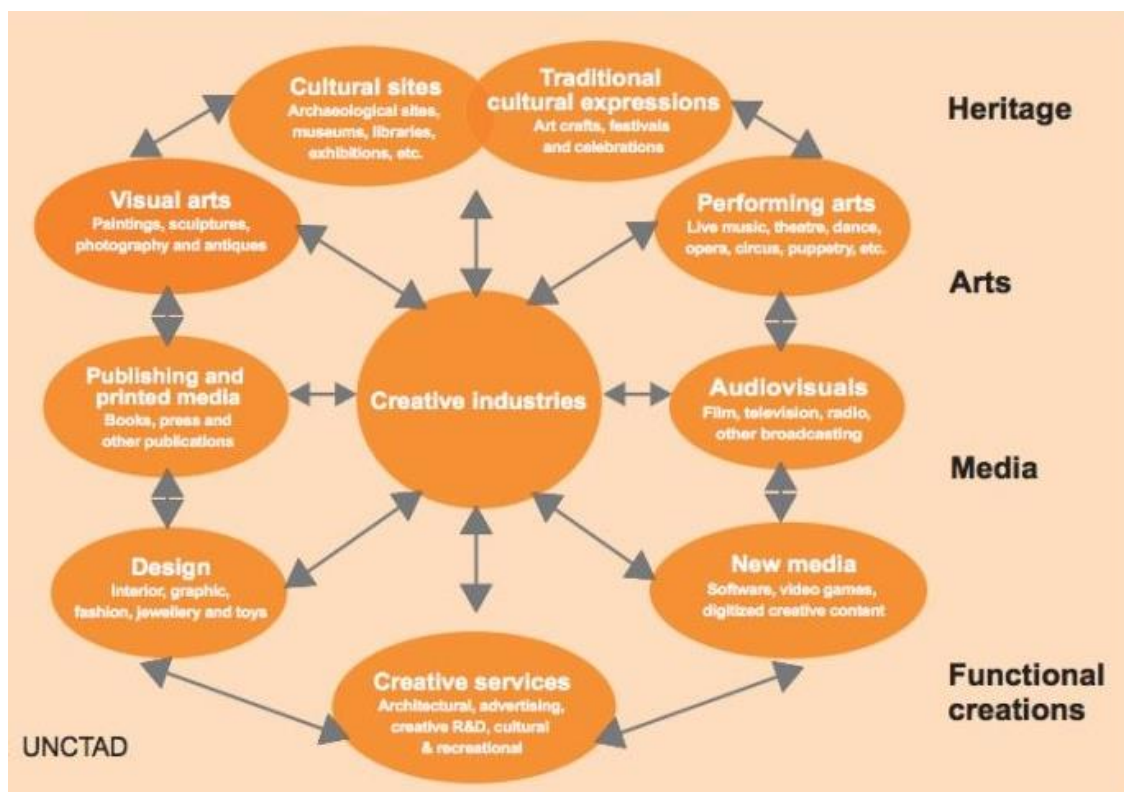


Figure 1: UNCTAD Classification of Creative Industries (UNCTAD, 2010, p.8)

For this thesis, the creative industries will be defined using the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) model of classification as it is one of the few to include the heritage sector, allowing the inclusion of the festival industry, a key driver of the Caribbean creative economy. As Figure 1 (above) illustrates, this model identifies four core

² See Appendix A for models of these classification systems.

sectors: heritage, arts, media and functional creations, under which numerous creative activities are incorporated.

Today, the creative industries continue to grow globally at significant rate, with the *Cultural Times* 2015 Report estimating that in 2013 they generated US 2,250 billion dollars in revenue worldwide (The International Federation of Societies of Authors and Composers, 2015). However, the global creative economy is by no means homogenous and in the Caribbean while some regional creative sectors are flourishing, others have not necessarily seen the same growth.

1.1.1 The Caribbean's creative industries

The creativity that flows from the Caribbean is abundant and is reflected in the region's emergent creative economy and its continued contribution to the global creative economy. As esteemed regional economist Norman Girvan points out "...this region has been the source of a creative outpouring in music, art, and culture that is out of all proportion to the modest population of the islands and related mainland"(Girvan, 2000, p. 6). The Caribbean certainly makes quite a striking impact, especially considering its relatively small size. Take for example the music sector, where the Caribbean has given the world the only acoustic instrument invented in the 20th century – the steelpan. The region has also birthed numerous musical genres giving the world reggae, dancehall, soca, calypso, chutney, reggaeton, rapso, parang, salsa and zouk (Manuel et al, 1995). These genres have been developed and shared by celebrated musical artists such as Jimmy Cliff, Shaggy, Rihanna, Beenie Man, Sean Paul, Machel Montano and of course the late Bob Marley, an artist who became a global icon with a music catalogue presently valued at over 100 million US dollars and an estate worth US 30 million (UNDP and UNESCO, 2013).

Apart from music, the region also boasts thriving theatre, visual arts and fashion design sectors. In the literary field, the region has also notably bred Nobel Laureates and acclaimed authors the likes of Sir Arthur Lewis, VS Naipaul, Derek Walcott and C.L.R James (Dance, 1986). However, the Caribbean has truly built its global reputation due to its thriving festival sector, boasting a continually expanding repertoire of festivals devoted to celebrating Caribbean music, culture, food, religion and sport. In Trinidad and Tobago there is the Trinidad Carnival, the Tobago Jazz Festival, the Tobago Blue Food Festival, the Tobago Heritage festival, Great Fete Weekend, and Divali Celebrations to name a few. Similarly, Jamaica hosts the Jamaica Carnival and Reggae Sumfest (a follow-up to the iconic Reggae Sunsplash), while Barbados has developed a huge following for its annual Crop Over carnival celebrations. These festivals are seasonal events, as there are often hundreds of smaller events and fêtes (parties) that take place before and after the grand finale street parades, with each island being well known for its uniquely flavoured events.³ Still, the reach of Caribbean festivals has extended far beyond the region since the diaspora have taken these festivals across the globe. Today, the world's largest festivals such as the Notting Hill Carnival in London, the West Indian American Day Carnival Parade (also known as the Labour Day Parade) in New York and the Caribana festival in Toronto are some of the largest celebrations of Caribbean culture, and earn their host nations approximately 93 million pounds sterling; 300 million US dollars and 200 million Canadian dollars respectively (Nurse, 2007; London Development Agency. 2003).

Now while it is easy to identify the Caribbean's impact from a sociocultural perspective, ratifying it through data remains a challenge. Research conducted by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), estimates that CARICOM

³ Other major regional festivals include the Grenada Spicemas; Grenada Regatta; St. Lucia Jazz and Arts Festival; St Kitts Music Festival, Dominica Mas; St Vincent festival; Antigua Carnival; Suriname Salsa and Zouk Festival etc.

countries account for approximately 0.01% and 0.04% of world trade in creative goods and creative services respectively (ECLAC, 2012, p. 35). However, these figures are estimates at best and more detailed regional statistics are even harder to find. As Chapter Two will illustrate, there is little recent statistical data on the cumulative economic impact of the Caribbean's creative industries. In 2007, Jamaica was the first to conduct a full-scale investigation to track the contribution of the copyright industries,⁴ with figures showing that the sector earns 4.8 percent of the island's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and accounts for a 3% share of total employment across the island (James, 2007). In 2012, a similar WIPO study on Trinidad and Tobago showed that the copyright sector also represented 4.8% of the islands GDP, more than agriculture and hotels (James, 2012). However since these reports there have been few further attempts to track creative industry development, as regional government investments have been channelled toward alternative sectors that have been deemed as having more of a direct impact on national development. Yet recently as a result of the region's economic downturn⁵ and mounting national deficits, many island nations have been searching for new avenues to diversify their economies and the creative industries have emerged as a favourable option.

⁴ The WIPO frames the creative industries as 'copyright industries' (cf. WIPO. 2015).

⁵ For more on the regional economic downturn see the International Monetary Fund's World Economic Outlook Projections for 2016 (International Monetary Fund, 2016).

1.2 The research subject: Aim, objectives and research questions

This thesis introduces brand into the discourse surrounding this renewed interest in the region's creative industries. As this subject has never before been researched within the Caribbean context, this thesis aims to argue that brand is in fact a critical component of the creative economy and in so doing present a new and alternative framework that can be used for cultural analysis across the regional creative economy. While brand has been described as “a term that has become so overdefined that its meanings are variable” (Stern, 2006, p. 216), for the purposes of this thesis a good starting point is interpreting brand as “a name that symbolises a long-term engagement, crusade or commitment to a unique set of values, embedded into products, services and behaviours, which make the organisation, person or product stand apart or stand out” (Kapferer, 2012, p.12). However, it is important to note that this research intends to demonstrate that this definition of brand must be expanded in order to reflect the idiosyncrasies and intricacies that characterise the creative economy.

This thesis' unique approach to exploring the creative economy is critical because as Chapter Two will show, regional creative economy and cultural policy discourse is limited in that they do not address the social and cultural negotiations that occur across the creative economy. This research presents brand as a framework to address these limitations, as it offers new avenues within which to explore both the current and potential development of the Caribbean creative industries. While the rationale behind this focus on brand is discussed in detail in section 1.3, it is important to state here that within this thesis brand represents a dominant structure in the creative economy, operating on a personal, commercial and regional level. In exploring it in its many forms, this thesis approaches it from a cultural perspective, meaning this research will be concerned with the symbolic content of the creative economy, exploring the creators, their processes, the discourse surrounding the products, the identities involved and the Caribbeanness that is inherent within this symbolic economy.

In keeping with the overarching aim of using brand as an alternative means of examining the Caribbean's creative industries, three (3) key objectives have been identified by the researcher:

- i. To explore the way brand is crafted, framed and reproduced by cultural producers.
- ii. To describe how brand (interpreted as symbolic, linguistic, visual and commercial) impacts the dynamics of the Caribbean creative economy.
- iii. To examine Brand Caribbean in the context of issues pertaining to the global creative economy.

In contextualising these objectives, it is important to state that this research is not an exclusive study of the creative economy, nor is it an exclusive study of brand, and as such does not take an economics-based approach to the creative economy or a business-focussed approach to brand. Instead this thesis should be seen as an inductive study of the cultural dimension of the creative economy, focusing on what this thesis argues to be a core factor – brand. This alternative approach allows the research to explore the relationships between brand and cultural production, experience, meaning, identity, creativity, value, history, global exchange and the like. In so doing, it is able to generate new knowledge about the dynamics of the regional creative economy, the frameworks that surround it and the role that brand plays within both.

The thesis uses data gathered from qualitative interviews with twenty-five industry stakeholders (both public and private sector), as well as regional policy documents, to explore the role of brand within the context of sector, national and regional cultural production. It describes the ways in which brand is framed, constructed and used by regional cultural producers, and examines the ways in which it affects the dynamics at play within the regional creative economy. The thesis also explores the Caribbean brand (henceforth referred to as Brand Caribbean). It looks at whether there is value in the construction of Brand Caribbean

and if this value is recognised by regional cultural producers. The thesis also studies Brand Caribbean's larger role within the global creative economy, as well as examining the interplay between Caribbeanness, national brands and cultural identity. The abovementioned is of course encapsulated in the thesis' five (5) core research questions:

RQ 1: How is brand understood, constructed and used by cultural producers within the Caribbean creative economy?

RQ 2: How does brand influence the dynamics of the Caribbean creative economy?

RQ 3: What is the 'Brand Caribbean', as defined within a global creative economy framework?

RQ 4: What are the relationships between national brands, cultural identities and Brand Caribbean?

RQ 5: What role does Brand Caribbean play within the global creative economy?

As evidenced above, the scope of these research questions is quite broad and offers the space to investigate the various elements at play where brand and the creative economy intersect. In collecting the data, examining the information, developing themes and ultimately responding to these questions, this thesis is able to achieve its aim of developing a critical cultural analysis of the role of brand within the Caribbean's creative economy, and understanding the way in which it functions, both on its own and within the context of the larger global economy. In exploring these issues, the thesis demonstrates that brand is one of the most critical forms of currency within the global creative marketplace and plays an influential role in the process of cultural production. However it also illustrates that brand's influence remains stymied by various social, political and cultural tensions within the Caribbean creative economy.

1.3 The research rationale

One of the primary catalysts behind this research is the fact that the Caribbean's creative economy is an underdeveloped and under-resourced field. As Chapter Two will illustrate, the Caribbean has not invested much in creative economy research, in part because the region's governing bodies do not fully recognise the value of the creative industries as agents for social, cultural and economic development. Consequently, there is a critical need for research like this which through its exploration of themes related to national identity, regional integration and cultural development, can further highlight the cultural contribution of the regional creative economy. In so doing, this thesis can further articulate the value of the creative industries and add to the growing pool of knowledge on the various social, cultural and economic offerings of the regional creative economy.

Still, even as the scholarship around the regional creative economy slowly expands, the research in this thesis has identified a gap. To date, most regional academic creative economy research produces macro-level analyses where the industry is charted in terms of economic, industrial and political factors. This research is usually conducted within an economic framework, with the focus on structure, functionality, trade and economic remuneration. Now while this economic perspective provides fiscal and commerce-driven insight, it often overlooks sociocultural dynamics. As such, there was a clear need to further develop the regional canon of creative economy research utilising a more culture-centered approach, where researchers do not just focus on the economy aspect of the creative economy, but also on the cultural.

This thesis contributes to responding to the abovementioned gap by creating a conceptual space within which the creative economy can be assessed from a fresh cultural perspective. Focusing on brand highlights the cultural and aesthetic dimensions of the creative economy,

thus encouraging a much more culturally-driven analysis. As a result, this thesis veers away from the traditional practise of viewing the creative economy as a space for the trading of goods and services, recognising that it is also a symbolic economy where symbols and meaning are negotiated and exchanged (Lash and Lury, 2007). Re-conceptualising the creative economy to view it as a symbolic economy shapes the direction and scope of this thesis both in term of the methodological processes used and the lens through which the data collected is assessed. Consequently, it ultimately offers alternative metrics with which to assess the regional creative economy.

Why Brand?

This research uses brand as a theoretical framework through which to gain a greater understanding of the Caribbean, its creative economy, its brands and their larger roles within the global marketplace. The decision to focus on brand was taken in part because the study would be the first to position brand as a central mechanism in the regional creative economy, and as such the thesis would produce original research. Using brand as a theoretical framework offered a unique lens with which to examine, understand and potentially offer explanations surrounding the workings of the Caribbean's creative industries with respect to organisation, production, distribution and consumption.

Brand also proved to be a great cornerstone for analysis because it presents an opportunity to explore a broad range of ideas that may have otherwise remained separate areas of study. As this thesis will reveal, using a brand framework synthesises key factors such as identity, value, meaning, creativity, and economy, all of which need to be explored if the aim is to create a critical analysis of the creative economy. In using this new framework the thesis can explore these diverse range of factors and examine how the relationships between them shape both

the negotiations that cultural producers engage in, as well as the overall development of the regional creative economy.

In addition to the above, the success of global branding initiatives also provided further incentive for studying brand on a national and regional scale. To date, several nations have adopted branding campaigns as a means of propelling their national sectors. Take for example, Singapore's nation branding campaign that was launched in 1996 and has arguably contributed to the nation's ascent to its current position as Asia's top city and the best city worldwide for investment potential, all in spite of the nation's small size and its lack of natural resources (Brand Finance, 2015; Singapore Government, 2015). Likewise, in 2009 South Korea launched the Presidential Council on Nation Branding in a bid to "expand the contribution to international society; disseminate the value of traditional culture, strengthen global communication and pursue nationwide integration (Presidential Council on Nation Branding, 2016). Brand South Africa has also seen some success in using their campaign as a vehicle to further national development through research into critical areas such as domestic perception, nation brand reputation, global competitiveness, investor perceptions and media reputation (Brand South Africa, 2015).

On a smaller scale, brand campaigns have also proven successful for cities such as Seoul, Rio de Janeiro and Dubai, currently listed as 5th, 7th and 10th respectively on the 'Guardian Cities global city brand barometer' (Michael and Sedghi, 2014). The fact that brand has proven successful for all of these nations and cities provides reassurance that it may also prove useful within a Caribbean framework. Much like it has done for the abovementioned nations, improving branding and subsequent strategic communication can open avenues for development and growth for the Caribbean's creative industries and Brand Caribbean.

Ultimately, if the Caribbean creative economy needs to negotiate a stronger position within the global economy then this research suggests that brand provides an avenue to do so. In illustrating this, it is hoped that this thesis will prove of service to industry stakeholders and cultural producers across all sectors, helping them grasp a deeper understanding of brand and its position within the regional creative economy. It is also hoped that the insights provided here will assist the region's cultural policy makers in reshaping their ideas around the Caribbean creative economy and allow them to make more well-rounded and informed decisions regarding much needed sector development.

1.4 The scope of the research

To start, it is first important to clarify the scope of the term 'Caribbean'. Within this thesis, the term Caribbean will be used to refer to Caribbean Community (CARICOM)⁶ member nations only. Presently, CARICOM has fifteen (15) member states: Antigua and Barbuda; the Bahamas; Barbados; Belize; Dominica; Grenada; Guyana; Haiti; Jamaica; Montserrat; St Kitts and Nevis; St. Lucia; St. Vincent and the Grenadines; Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago. It also has five additional associate members Anguilla, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, and Turks and Caicos Islands.⁷

This thesis has chosen to focus on CARICOM nations since apart from the obvious geographical proximity, they also share several commonalities. Firstly, they all have a similar historical narrative and as such their cultural influences, social structures and the challenges and opportunities that stem from both are similar across the islands. Secondly, the fact that they have similar political structures and share a central governing body means that the

⁶ CARICOM is the region's primary governing body and its principal objectives include: "improved standards of living and work; full employment of labour and other factors of production; accelerated, co-ordinated and sustained economic development and convergence; expansion of trade and economic relations with third States; enhanced levels of international competitiveness; organisation of increased production and productivity" (CARICOM Secretariat, 2016).

⁷ This thesis focuses primarily on the fifteen core member states.

countries are also formally connected. Thirdly, since this thesis focuses on Brand Caribbean, it is important to be able to look past individual island states and see the region as a singular entity, and in that regard CARICOM remains the primary organisation that connects these nations and thus validates the communal identity that they all share. In summary, the fact that these countries all share intertwined historical, political and cultural backgrounds means that there are similarities amongst them that can form the basis for generalisations and as such for the purpose of this research the CARICOM relationship is extremely significant.

In the interest of feasibility and practicality, of the fifteen CARICOM member countries, this thesis will focus primarily, though not exclusively, on three nations: Barbados, Jamaica and the twin island nation of Trinidad and Tobago. Due in large part to their wealth and size, these three islands have dominated CARICOM since its inception and have remained the most influential to date. These territories were also specifically selected because they have the strongest national creative economies, with research showing that these three nations produce the lion's share – sixty-six percent (66%) of regional creative goods that reach the global market (ECLAC, 2012, p.38). As such, these three nations provided the most data and opportunities for researching the region's creative sectors, given their relative wealth, infrastructure and cultural production capabilities.

Similarly, due to limitations of time and resources, this thesis focuses primarily on three sectors of the Caribbean's creative economy: Music, Festivals and Fashion. These sectors were selected because they offer the best returns on investment, having been identified by Dr Hilary Brown, CARICOM's Programme Manager on Culture and Community Development, as the areas with the highest potential for growth and development, during her 2010 speech at the symposium celebrating World Intellectual Property Rights Day in Guyana (Caribbean

Secretariat Community, 2010). Similarly the Trinidad and Tobago Foresight Project,⁸ also identified these three national sectors as the ‘best bets’ for national investment (National Institute of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology, 2007). To date, festivals and music remain the highest economic earners for the Caribbean’s creative economy, with estimates showing that the recording industry in Jamaica earns US 80 to 100 million in foreign exchange, while the live performance industry in Trinidad earns 50-60 US million and the festival industry in Barbados earns 20-25 million (Nurse, 2006). Also, as the fashion sector continues to grow but is not yet a top earner, its inclusion in this thesis presents the opportunity to discuss the experiences aligned with the earlier stages of a sector’s development. Furthermore, the analysis of these three diverse sectors allows for a broad overview of the creative economy, since each sector is representative of one of the core creative industry strains: media; arts; functional design and heritage.⁹ As such, it is clear that these three sectors were best suited for developing a series of penetrating insights of the regional creative economy.

Finally, in outlining the scope of this thesis, it is also important to note that the focus of this research is cultural producers and not cultural consumers. Given that brand is frequently approached from the consumer’s perspective, focusing on cultural producers was a strategic decision taken to delineate this work from the heavily saturated field of consumer brand research. Also, since consumption is very difficult to track and assess, particularly in an informal market such as the Caribbean, focusing on the consumer relationship with brand would have been particularly challenging given the region’s lack of infrastructure. It also seemed much more beneficial to study cultural producers since this group of stakeholders

⁸ This project was aimed at identifying avenues for growth and investment for multiple national sectors.

⁹ See the *Creative Economy Report 2010* for the UNCTAD classification of the Creative Industries (UNCTAD and UNDP, 2010, p.8)

possess the agency to affect change and ultimately influence the position of regional creative economy within the global marketplace.

Overall, all the decisions taken in mapping out the scope of this thesis were strategically made in order to ensure that the field was manageable yet diverse enough to be able to produce a critical analysis of the regional creative economy .

1.5 An overview of the Caribbean context

To fully understand the context within which this research is conducted, the reader must be aware of a few distinct features of the Caribbean that have a direct impact on the workings of the regional creative economy. Thus, this section offers a brief overview of the territories, their economic standing and their rich history, so that the reader may have a full appreciation of the research framework.

1.5.1 The Caribbean's territories

From a geographical perspective the Caribbean, also known as the West Indies, refers to the area east of Central America and north of South America (between 10° and 26° North) within the Caribbean Sea¹⁰. In studying the Caribbean, it is important to first appreciate the topography of the region since the physical landscape and the space that separates the islands play a significant role in the creative economy, particularly in terms of shaping cultural production and cultural distribution. Secondly, it is important that the reader recognises that in reality, the term 'Caribbean' is an umbrella term for fifteen separate nations. Thus, while the term 'Caribbean' does generate connotations of a collective, in reality the term is a geo-political paradigm that has been created to blanket a region of diverse nations. Acknowledging that the Caribbean is defined by a political framework, more so than some sort of intrinsic

¹⁰ However, as aforementioned, within the context of this thesis the Caribbean refers only to CARICOM's fifteen member states.

connection, is an important step for helping reader to understand the tensions that face a regional economy, as these tensions have several implications, many of which are evident throughout this thesis.

Additionally it must be noted that across these Caribbean nations, the national economies differ significantly, particularly in terms of resources and wealth. According to the 2016 World Bank GDP per capita report, the richest of the CARICOM Caribbean nations are the Bahamas (GDP 22,217.5 US dollars), closely followed by Trinidad and Tobago, St. Kitts and Nevis and Barbados. However there is a huge gap between the earnings of these nations and the likes of Haiti (GDP 824.2 US dollars) Guyana, Belize, and Jamaica, which constitute the region's poorest territories (World Bank, 2016). While these wealth disparities are owing to many factors, the richest regional economies are usually those with natural resources, which include natural gas, petroleum, asphalt, hydropower, beaches, flora and fauna etc. However, as some of these resources are more commercially valuable and easier to monetise, it is not just a nation's reserves of natural resources but the economic viability of those resources that become key determinants in the organisation of its economy with respect to trade, production, distribution and consumption.

Understanding the vast differences in resource dispersion and wealth across the region is important for appreciating the dynamics at play within the regional creative economy. All nations are not created equal and their financial standing has a clear impact on their national creative economy as it determines not only how much a nation can afford to invest in cultural production, but also the type of infrastructure within which production takes place, as well as the types of goods they are able to produce. Furthermore, this geo-political imbalance of resources has serious implications where regional integration is concerned, as regional initiatives must account for the different economic capabilities of territories based on the resources that each has at its disposal. As becomes evident throughout this thesis, the

mediation of discrepancies in national wealth plays a crucial role in the organisation and development of the regional creative economy.

1.5.2 The Caribbean's colonial history

Most territories in the Caribbean share a similar historical narrative, and the region's colonial history is particularly relevant to this research. Prior to colonial inhabitancy, the Caribbean had vibrant indigenous populations of native Amerindians who had migrated from Latin America and brought with them unique linguistic, artistic, and spiritual practices, traces of which are still evident in contemporary Caribbean societies. However, on October 12, 1492 Christopher Columbus re-discovered the region and the resultant colonisation of the islands lead to mass expulsion of locals and genocide. Later, when the French, British and Dutch forces also entered the region, frequent wars ensued as the Europeans fought over the islands, and as a result the islands switched hands between European monarchs numerous times.¹¹

The turn of the seventeenth century heralded the sugar revolution, which was characterised by “a shift from diversified agriculture to monoculture, from small to large scale farming units, from low to high value output, from sparse to dense settlement patterns and from free labour to slavery” (Higman, 2011, p. 98). In order to support the sugar economy, millions of Africans were shuttled to the region via the transatlantic slave trade to work on plantations and agricultural estates. During this era the region flourished economically though socially many slave rebellions and uprisings created a tense and uneasy climate, as it proved increasingly difficult to navigate “the boisterous, violent society of struggling settlers, prospering planters, exasperated officials, machinating merchants, suffering slaves and ambivalent free persons of colour” (Knight, 2012, p. 63).

¹¹ Take for example the island of St. Lucia which changed hands over fourteen times between the Spanish, the French, the Dutch and the English (The Commonwealth, 2016).

Meanwhile in Europe, movements for the abolition of slave labour were growing, fuelled by both human rights and religious principles. Slavery was eventually abolished in 1834 in the British colonies, in 1848 in French and Danish Colonies, in 1863 in the Dutch colonies and in 1888 in the last of the Spanish colonies. Following the abolition there was a mandatory period of apprenticeship to ease the transition from slave labour to paid labour, during which new labourers were sourced from various territories, mainly India, China, Portugal, Lebanon and Syria. However, with the importation of indentured paid labour, profits declined and the sugar industry soon collapsed.

The region's shared colonial history has had a profound impact on regional culture, as well as the development of the contemporary creative economy. For example, it is because the islands changed monarchs frequently that most Caribbean islands have remnants of multiple European influences, evident not only in historical artefacts and cultural practises but also even in the seemingly mundane such as street and city names. Likewise, it is the influx of arrivals from Europe, Africa and Asia that have contributed to the development of the region's multicultural societies where these once foreign influences have uniquely blended into a diverse and colourful local culture. Of course, one cannot ignore the multiplicity of adverse effects that this history has borne including the exploitation of the island's resources and people, a long and continuous struggle for complete independence, an embattled process of identity formation and a landscape fraught with racial tension, to name a few.

Today, in the midst of politicised demands for reparations for native genocide and slavery, the colonial history still leaves a mark on the political, economic, social and cultural landscapes of the region. It is this shared history and the communal challenge of tackling the postcolonial ideologies that have been handed down across generations that account for the similarities evident in many cultural forms and expressions across the region. In this way, the region's colonial history continues to have an immense influence on cultural production, distribution

and consumption across the regional creative economy and it is important for the reader to acknowledge this when contextualising this research.

1.6 The structure of thesis

The following outline details the organisation of this thesis's subsequent chapters:

Chapter Two:

This chapter covers the previous research that has been conducted in relevant fields, beginning with an overview of the patterns in contemporary Caribbean creative industry research, focusing on industry-mapping and policy and trade research. Following this, the chapter then explores the regional research that has been done on this thesis' three principle creative sectors: music, festivals and fashion.

Chapter Three:

This chapter develops the theoretical framework for this thesis, starting with an explanation of this thesis' understanding of the creative economy as a symbolic economy. It then proceeds to discuss both the traditional role of brand, followed by the reimagined role that brand plays across the regional creative economy as a symbolic, cultural and strategic tool. The chapter also provides background for key theoretical concepts that appear throughout the analysis chapters of this thesis such as the nation brand, identity and authenticity.

Chapter Four:

This chapter details the data collection process beginning with a justification for the selection of qualitative and interview research methods. It then proceeds to discuss the methodological and contextual challenges of conducting creative industry research in the Caribbean. Following this, it discusses the research design, the process of conducting the interviews and

the data analysis stage. It then closes with a reflection on the role of the researcher and the ethical considerations related to this thesis.

Chapter Five:

This chapter, the first of the analysis chapters, focuses on policy and its role in the Caribbean's creative economy. It explores national, regional and transnational policy and the legislation that have shaped the sphere within which brand operates. It also examines a selection of policy documents in order to establish the role that brand plays within these existent frameworks.

Chapter Six:

This analysis chapter is devoted to answering RQ 1 and RQ 2, the first two of this thesis' research questions (listed in section 1.2). In doing so, it explores the meanings associated with brand, the construction of brand and the ways in which brand is used as a strategic tool within the local context. The chapter then goes on to define brand's role in the Caribbean creative economy in relation to two themes: creativity and value.

Chapter Seven:

The final of the analysis chapters answers this thesis' three remaining research question: RQ 3, RQ 4 and RQ 5. It first focuses on defining Brand Caribbean, as well as exploring the 'Caribbeanness' that is inherent in it. It then proceeds to examine the interplay between national and regional identity and the implications these have for competition and collaboration within the context of the Brand Caribbean. The chapter also explores the role of Brand Caribbean within the global creative economy, focusing on the debates around the notion of success.

Chapter Eight:

The conclusion chapter synthesises the core ideas presented throughout the thesis, crafting a cohesive analysis of the finding of this research in relation to policy and practise across the regional creative economy. The chapter then closes with a discussion around ideas and implications for much needed culture-centred research on the Caribbean creative economy.

Conclusion

This introductory chapter is intended to acquaint the reader with the background knowledge required for contextualising this thesis. The chapter begins by discussing the Caribbean's creative industries, highlighting the various ways in which Caribbean cultural products have contributed to the global creative economy. The chapter then moves on to introduce the research subject, explaining this thesis' focus on brand and Brand Caribbean. It then proceeds to explain the principal aim of this thesis, its core objectives and the five (5) research questions around which the thesis' analysis is built.

Following this the chapter then clearly delineates the scope of this project, explaining that the focus has been narrowed down to cultural producers from CARICOM nations who work across three key sectors: music, festivals and fashion. Next, it presents the rationale for this research project, justifying the significance of this particular research project for both cultural producers and government stakeholders. The chapter then presents an overview of the Caribbean context, focusing on the region's territories and colonial history before closing with an outline of the structure of the thesis. Given that the reader now has an understanding of both the research topic, as well as an appreciation of the Caribbean context within which the research is being conducted, the following chapter explores the literature surrounding both.

Chapter Two: Researching the Region

The previous chapter outlined the research topic and introduced this thesis' claims that regional creative economy discourse must be expanded to include culturally-focused analyses. This chapter build on this and presents an overview of current regional creative economy research with the intent of illustrating its somewhat linear focus, subsequent limitations and the research gaps within which brand can be introduced as an alternative framework for analysis. In identifying the gaps in regional academic scholarship, this chapter provides further justification for this research, presenting proof of this thesis' relevance and value not only within the academic realm, but also within social, political and economic spheres.

The chapter begins by first outlining the global research field, clarifying where this thesis should be positioned. It then proceeds to focus on recent patterns in regional creative industry research, concentrating on two core strains: industry mapping and trade and policy research. Following this, the chapter then explores the research that has been done on the regional sectors that this thesis focuses on – music, festivals and fashion. It is hoped that by the close of this chapter, the reader has been able to fully contextualise this research and understand where this thesis is positioned in relation to both regional and global scholarship.

2.1 Identifying patterns in Caribbean creative economy research

The role of brand across the creative economy has only really become the subject of academic scholarship over the last three decades. While this thesis focuses specifically on the Caribbean region in hopes of producing novel research, it must be stated that the role of brand within the creative economy has been widely explored on a global stage. For example, this thesis draws on the work of Scott Lash and John Urry whose seminal text *Economies of Sign and Space* in contemporary society, objects must now be acknowledged as cultural symbols, as the world now represents a space within which signs, as opposed to objects are the subject of exchange in global economies (Lash and Urry, 1994). Scott Lash's work with Celia Lury has also proven relevant as it has explored similar themes, showcasing the movement from commodities to brands and exploring the role of these new cultural objects in contemporary economic systems (Lash and Lury, 2007).

Celia Lury's independent work on brand has also informed this thesis, particularly her ideas around brand's influence across the economy, where she paints brand in an influential position as a mediator of "the supply and demand of products and services in a global economy" (Lury, 2004, p.i). Liz Moor's work on the evolution of brand and the role of brand as a means of governance is also particularly relevant to this thesis. In her text *The Rise of Brands*, her claims about brands include "that they organise forms of economic activity; that they render a greater array of materials communicative and informational, that they attempt to give concrete physical form to abstract values and concepts, and that they try to influence the perception and behaviour of customers and citizens (Moor, 2007, p.143). Ultimately, all of the above concepts and ideas, alongside others that will be discussed in this thesis' theory chapter, have laid the groundwork for this thesis claims that brand and brand's role in the Caribbean creative economy has been grossly underestimated and is thus deserving of more attention and prioritisation by both industry stakeholders and governmental agencies.

However, in comparison with the global field the Caribbean has lagged behind, as the creative economy has not been a regional research priority. Consequently, the Caribbean's portfolio of CCI research is quite limited in both range and volume. As this chapter will illustrate, there are only a handful of academics (usually in the arts and economics disciplines) that produce creative industry research. Apart from their independent work, they are often employed as consultants for national ministries and agencies, as well as the few regional¹² and intergovernmental¹³ organisations who have a vested interest in the growth of the regional creative economy. Thus while there is not a massive cannon of Caribbean-centred literature to draw upon, the research archives have been steadily developing over the last couple of years, driven by a small number of contributors.

An analysis of regional CCI research will show that as stakeholders' understanding of the creative economy evolved, and an appreciation for its potential grew, there were corresponding changes in the volume and nature of the research being produced. In a 2007 policy paper, cultural studies researcher Suzanne Burke explains that the evolution of the Caribbean's creative industries and its governing policy has undergone three stages of development, each shaped by the manner in which the region problematized culture at that time (Burke, 2007). The first phase that Burke dubs 'the creolization of culture', is the period where Caribbean nations were fighting to gain independence and as such, policy and research focused on issues such as colonisation, racism and forging the Caribbean identity. Phase two, which Burke situates in the 1970s, represents an era where cultural diversity and cultural expression came to the forefront. However, phase three, which represents the region's current state, is characterised by the re-evaluation and re-assessment of the creative industries in terms of their potential contribution to the region, with a particular focus on economic profitability.

¹² The regional agencies that have commissioned creative industry research include CARICOM, CARIFORUM, The Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery, The Caribbean Development Export Agency, and The University of the West Indies.

¹³ To date, UNESCO, UNDP, UNCTAD, WIPO, ECLAC and SELA have all funded regional creative economy research.

As expected there is a clear parallel between the way that the creative industries are currently positioned (as a potential money-maker) and the direction of creative industry research. As sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 will show, contemporary regional CCI research can be loosely organised into two key streams: ‘Industry mapping’ research and ‘Trade and policy’ research, both of which are aligned with the present commerce-driven interests of the region.

2.1.1 Industry mapping research

The first stream of creative industry research that is popular across the region is industry mapping. While there have only been a few large-scale studies, over the past decade various national and regional agencies have commissioned smaller mapping reports aimed at tracking national and regional creative sectors and determining the best avenues for sector development. Local mapping initiatives began around the early 2000s and in 2006, CARICOM hosted a joint meeting with the WIPO for ‘Experts in the creative economy and intellectual property’. At this meeting CARICOM’s Programme Manager for Culture and Community Development presented a paper on regional creative economy initiatives (Brown, 2006), which illustrated that there were very few locally driven initiatives, with the vast majority being partially or wholly financed by transnational organisations such as UNESCO, UNCTAD, UNDP, WIPO, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), European Union, and the Inter-American Development Bank.

As the Caribbean is comprised of developing nations, many islands are highly reliant on international funding for their creative economy research. The source of funding is particularly important, since it means that regional research continues to be built around schemas set by international organisations, which of course has many implications regarding agenda-setting and the representativeness of the needs of the local context. In fact, these implications extend beyond regional research to international mapping exercises where the

Caribbean is routinely merged with Latin America, a move that proves problematic as the latter exceedingly dwarfs the former in both size and cultural output, meaning the data is skewed to reflect the Latin American economy rather than the Caribbean's (UNCTAD 2010; UNDP and UNESCO 2013; CISAC, 2015). Therefore, in reading this chapter, the reader is reminded to be mindful of the funding streams from which regional research is generated and the subsequent implications.

However, irrespective of the funding source, the region's current focus remains on monetizing culture and finding new pathways to generate income from cultural products, and thus mapping exercises have recently morphed into statistics-based economic analyses. This genre of research tends to produce macro-level analyses of the creative economy, where the inquiries focus on issues such as contribution to GDP, employment figures, industry structure, infrastructure, value chain analyses and so forth. In 2006, Keith Nurse, arguably the region's most prolific publisher on the creative economy, identified four key areas within which there was a dire need for regional creative economy data mapping: "exports, employment, contribution to GDP and infringement" (Nurse, 2006, p.5) and to date these areas remain the central focus of regional creative economy mapping initiatives.

Within the region there have been three large scale mapping exercises that have had a significant impact on the creative economy. The studies produced by Vanus James traced the economic contribution of the copyright industries in Jamaica (James, 2007), Trinidad and Tobago (James, 2012) and Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS)¹⁴ (James 2012). As they were all funded by the WIPO, they focus solely on the copyright industries, providing in-depth statistical data about creative sector contributions to GDP and employment, not just from the core copyright industries but also from 'inter-dependent' and 'partial' copyright

¹⁴ The OECS was launched in 1981 and has nine member states: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, British Virgin Islands, Dominica, St. Kitts and Nevis, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The organisation works towards the "economic integration" of its members and they all share a singular currency – The Eastern Caribbean Dollar [ECD] (OECS, 2016).

sectors, as well as the non-dedicated support sectors.¹⁵

Country	Year of publication	Total share	Core	inter-dependant	Partial	Non-dedicated	Total share	Core	inter-dependant	Partial	Non-dedicated
Canada	2002	5.38%	3.99%	*	*	*	6.96%	*	*	*	*
Colombia	2006	3.3%	1.05%	0.80%	0.30%	0.40%	5.8%	1.70%		1.90%	1.50%
Dominica	2012	3.40%	1.25%	0.30%	0.68%	1.38%	4.80%	1.97%	0.06%	0.28%	2.50%
Grenada	2012	4.60%	2.12%	0.30%	0.96	1.22%	3.60%	1.34%	0.38%	0.82%	1.05%
Jamaica	2007	4.81%	1.70%	0.74%	0.47	1.90%	3.03%	1.79%	0.31%	0.23%	0.68%
Jordan	2012	2.43%	1.53%	0.12%	0.21	0.57%	2.88%	1.80%	0.08%	0.20%	0.80%
Malaysia	2008	5.70%	2.90%	2.10%	0.60	0.10%	7.50%	4.70%	1.60%	0.90%	0.20%
Mexico	2006	4.77%	1.55%	1.69%	0.85	0.68%	11.01%	3.41%	3.65%	2.53%	1.41%
Panama	2009	6.35%	5.40%	0.06%	0.05	0.84%	3.17%	1.52%	1.20%	0.31%	0.13%
Peru	2009	2.67%	1.23%	0.28%	0.02	1.14%	4.50%	2.09%	0.14%	0.07%	2.20%
Philippines	2006	4.82%	3.53%	0.96%	0.04	0.29%	11.10%	8.81%	1.40%	0.20%	0.60%
South Africa	2011	4.11%	2.05%	0.56%	0.21	1.29%	4.08%	2.31%	0.51%	0.23%	1.03%
South Korea	2012	9.89%	3.51%	4.75%	0.66	0.97%	6.24%	2.85%	1.59%	0.67%	1.12%
St Kitts & Nevis	2012	6.60%	4.29%	0.56%	0.93	0.82%	3.10%	1.44%	0.45%	0.81%	0.41%
St Lucia	2012	8.00%	4.38%	0.26%	2.13%	1.23%	4.40%	1.85%	0.33%	1.09%	1.14%
St Vincent & The Grenadines	2012	5.60%	2.73%	0.13%	1.09%	1.66%	4.90%	1.81%	0.15%	1.01%	1.81%
Trinidad & Tobago	2011	4.80%	1.41%	0.13%	0.97%	2.28%	5.00%	2.67%	1.73%	0.20%	0.41%
USA	2011	11.10%	6.36%	2.25%	0.22%	2.27%	8.19%	3.93%	2.17%	0.26%	2.03%

Table 1: Contribution of Copyright Industries to GDP and Employment (WIPO) (Oxford Economics, 2014, p.60)

As is depicted in the Table 1 (above), the copyright industries contribution to GDP for the Caribbean islands are: Dominica (3.4%); Grenada (4.6%); Jamaica (4.81%); St. Kitts & Nevis (6.6%); St. Lucia (8%); St. Vincent and the Grenadines (5.6%) and Trinidad and Tobago (4.8%). The report was also able to generate data regarding employment for the four copyright sectors. However while the reports were extensive, using the WIPO framework was

¹⁵ As per WIPO designations, core copyright industries are “defined as wholly engaged in the creation, production, performance, exhibition, communication or distribution and sales of copyright protected subject matter”. “Inter-dependent copyright industries” refer to those with “products jointly consumed with the core industries, or with facilitation equipment”, and partial copyright industries are those “in which only part of the production is linked to copyright material”. Non-dedicated copyright industries “only remotely rely on copyright material” (WIPO, 2005).

limiting, particularly within the context of this research, since festivals and fashion do not fall within the parameters of copyright industries (according to WIPO classifications). As such, the economic contribution they make to the Caribbean creative economy is not explicitly addressed within these reports. The absence of critical sectors that are essentially the ‘bread and butter’ of several regional creative economies affects both the internal validity, strength and usefulness of these reports. Thus while these reports are statistically sound, they do not reflect the entirety of the region’s diverse creative economy.

Apart from these reports, there are several other smaller economic analyses, whose data will be discussed later in Section 2.2 which looks at sector-specific data. However, a final mapping report that deserves mention is ‘The Trinidad and Tobago Foresight project’. This project, funded locally by the National Institute of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (NIHERST) was not simply a data collection exercise but also functioned as a tool for risk assessment and the appraisal of various sectors for investment purposes. The report relied on stakeholder interviews and assessments of critical environmental factors such as “existing commercial expertise, research and development expertise, skills availability, resource availability, government policies and support programmes, and infrastructure” (Nurse, Reis et al., 2007, p.3). This research projected that significant creative economy growth could be garnered from the development of three projects: a Caribbean music portal, a ‘Carnival in a box’ export package company and a fashion cluster. The report identifies these sectors or ‘Best Bets’, as promising the best return on investment, but also points out that these potential projects require hefty private and public sector input and must still contend with a glaring lack of public sector infrastructure and governmental support. Still this report offers further justification that the three sectors selected for this thesis are the most worthy of investigation.

The challenge of mapping

In mapping the Caribbean creative economy, researchers face several challenges. At a 2009 UNESCO statistical training workshop, academic Jo-anne Tull identified a key obstacle as the Central Statistical Office's low drive to track cultural services and products because it viewed culture as something that is simply for amusement and as such does not merit research (Tull, 2009a). The regional governments' mistaken belief that culture is frivolous and thus does not warrant the time and resources that critical research requires, is one reason that the region has so few comprehensive studies and has to turn to external funding.

Another challenge associated with conducting creative economy research is the lack of coordinated research priorities. There is clear evidence of "a lack of standardisation of definitions, methodologies of data collection procedures, methods of analysis and dissemination of data and common classification systems. This makes regional comparison difficult due to an absence of harmonisation" (Harrison, 2006. p.3). Take for example, a 2006 national study that reported that the entertainment industry in Trinidad generates \$351.8 million per annum [with music earning 48% of the revenue, Carnival 44%; Visual Arts 5%, Theatre 2% and Dance 1%] (Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2006). The term 'entertainment sector', has been used almost simultaneously with cultural industries by various islands, all with their own unique definitions. As is evidenced above, Trinidad's entertainment sector does not include fashion and film. However, the Ministry of Entertainment in Jamaica recognises fashion, film, music, dance, visual and performing arts, but does not include carnival under its purview. The varying systems of classification across the region and even across national agencies, makes regional mapping efforts and comparative analyses quite challenging.

Additionally, gathering data and statistics within a developing nation's framework remains a difficult task. In a 2014 commissioned report, Oxford Economics identified the key areas for which creative economy data collection is needed as trade, infrastructure, employment/GDP and cultural consumption (See Figure 2 below). However, with informal markets, such as exist in the Caribbean, it is impossible to track figures for imports, exports and sales. In fact, infrastructure is the only factor for which credible statistics can be provided regionally, making it difficult to monitor sector production, distribution and consumption.

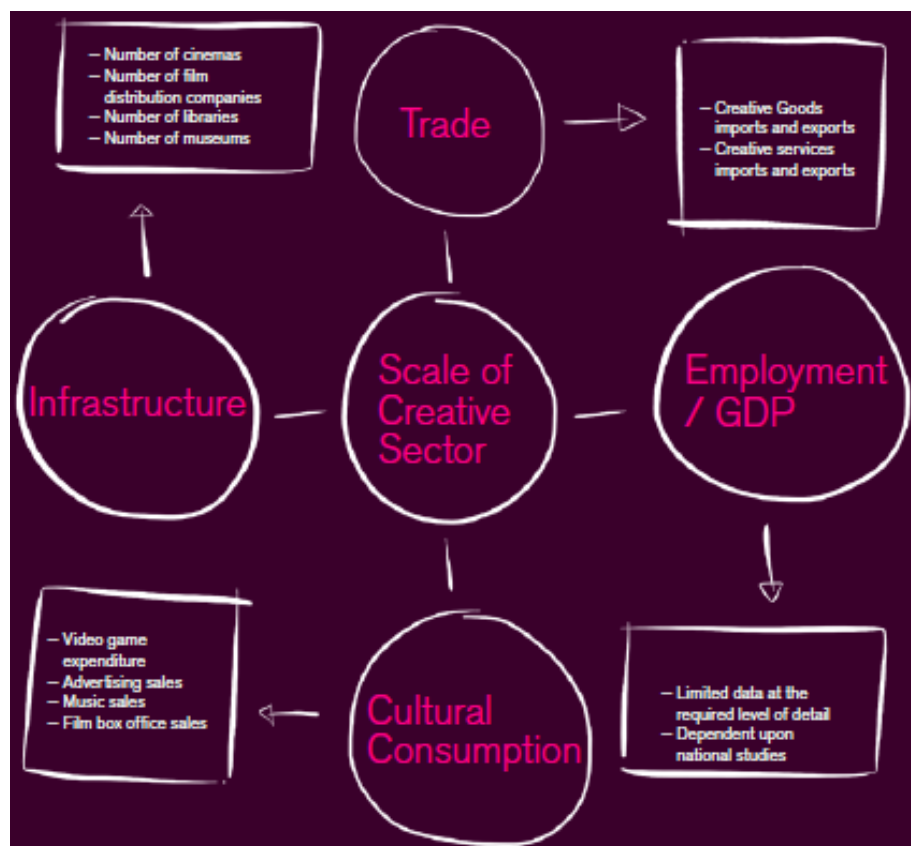


Figure 2: Creative Industries Data Collection (Oxford Economics, 2014 p.11)

Still, despite the contextual shortcomings, the region has been trying to work around its challenges. While a plan for the 'Cultural/Creative industry mapping network' that had emerged during a WIPO-CARICOM meeting has not yet materialised (Nurse 2006b, p.8), the region has invested more in creative economy research. Furthermore through initiatives such

as the 2012 ‘Statistics of International Trade in Services with a special focus on Creative Industries’ workshop, organised by the WTO in conjunction with CARICOM and WIPO, essential training on data collection has been delivered (Deloumeaux, 2012). If the regional powers choose to adopt the recommendations made (such as developing uniform methodological practises across the region, increasing resources, implementing supportive policy and bolstering the capacity of statistical institutions), new pathways for mapping the regional creative economy can be uncovered (Nurse and Nicholls, 2011).

2.1.2 Policy and trade research

Apart from mapping, the other stream of regional creative economy research that has become popularised is trade and policy. As the region seeks to develop its creative economy, fostering trade both regionally and internationally is a necessity which must be facilitated through supportive policy frameworks. A core assumption underlying trade and policy research is that it can further the improvement and quicken the implementation of sector policies, which then in turn serves to incentivise and ultimately procure much needed investments from potential stakeholders. Consequently this genre of research has now become the most common across the region’s creative sectors over the last two decades.

In reviewing trade and policy research, a good starting point is the 2004 ‘Workshop on the Impact of Trade and Technology on Caribbean Creative Industries’ hosted by the Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery (CRNM)¹⁶ in Trinidad. This workshop was one of the earliest dedicated solely to the creative industries and out of which the CRNM published a string of recommendations for sector development including the prioritisation of the creative economy by national governments and an increased focus on intra-regional markets for creative economy trade. The role of the government in improving regulation, policy, training and

¹⁶ The CRNM was a CARICOM unit dedicated to managing the region’s trade negotiations with external parties. In 2009 the organisation was renamed The CARICOM Office of Trade Negotiations (OTN).

infrastructural support was also a subject of debate. However, the recommendations also called on members of the public to increase private-sector involvement and for stakeholders to launch agencies to help advance their cause.

Following this, the CRNM became an instrumental part of regional creative economy development, later publishing a hefty trade and policy creative economy report. The 2007 report titled ‘The Cultural Industries in CARICOM: Trade and Development Challenges’ examined the core regional creative sectors (music, audio-visual, publishing, visual art, performing art, fashion and festivals) and highlighted the trade and policy issues that each sector faced. For example, it proved that high rates of import for equipment undermined both the music and audio-visual industries and that work permit restrictions, a lack of incentive regimes and a need for innovation were some of the key issues that undermined the festival sector (Nurse et al., 2007). However, what is particularly interesting in the context of this thesis is that the report illustrated that a lack of branding crippled the festival sector. The report recommended branding the Caribbean and presented an action plan, which included: “Develop marketing plan for intra- and extra-regional exports of cultural goods and services; Promote “Caribbean” seal of authenticity; Establish distinctive Caribbean products at official multilateral and bilateral trade; and Increase participation at cultural expos” (Nurse et al., 2007, p. 216). Regrettably these plans alongside many of the other strategic recommendations¹⁷ never materialised.

In 2009, CARICOM commissioned a similar policy and trade report. ‘The Creative Sector in CARICOM: The Economic and Trade Policy Dimensions’ (Nurse, 2009) presented case studies on the export of the steel pan (A creative good); the Bob Marley Museum (a creative service) and Caribbean Copyright link (a regional intellectual property organisation). However it is the report’s analysis of the CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)

¹⁷ See Appendix B – Table of strategic recommendations and action plans put forward by the CRNM.

that is particularly relevant. Signed in 2008, the EPA aimed to increase “Duty Free Quota Free (DFQF) access” for goods from CARIFORUM¹⁸ countries, and “provides market access for Caribbean firms and professionals in terms of cross border trade, investment, consumption abroad and temporary movement of persons in business services, communications, construction, distribution, environmental, financial, transport, tourism and cultural and entertainment services” (Nurse, 2009, p.13). Still, stakeholders have repeatedly questioned the value of the EPA, as many Caribbean islands do not yet have the resources, infrastructure and export capabilities to benefit from the above-mentioned concessions. Furthermore, while the EU remains a large market for global creative goods, reports indicate that “the US accounts for 56.6% of the region’s export and 38% of imports” (Burke, 2011, p.13), as such while an EU agreement is beneficial, the Americas still play a significantly larger role in regional trade. Still, the EPA is considered a great achievement for the regional creative sector despite the inability to track or verify its impact on trade to date.

Critiques of trade agreements like the EPA have become the subject of a few regional papers. In 2013, The CARICOM Regional Task Force on Cultural Industries published a paper titled, ‘The design and impact of an exemptions regime for the CARICOM Cultural Industries’ that explored the impact of exemptions schemes and their role as a means of incentivising investment and thus bolstering the regional creative economy. However in reviewing this paper, it becomes glaringly obvious that the impact of any trade regime is often derailed because implementation is left to national agencies, and thus schemes are sometimes rolled out nationally, yet not regionally. For example, one report showed that in Jamaica, exemption schemes only apply to music and film, in St. Lucia exemptions only cover Carnival-related

¹⁸ The Forum of Caribbean Group of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (CARIFORUM), is a regional body “for the purpose of promoting and coordinating policy dialogue, cooperation and regional integration, mainly within the framework of the Cotonou Agreement between the ACP and the European Union and also the CARIFORUM-European Community Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)” (CARICOM, 2011). CARIFORUM members include all CARICOM member states and the Dominican Republic.

activities and in Barbados there were no culture-specific exemption schemes at the time of the report's publication (Silva, 2013). So while trade incentives are present, a lack of coordination across the region undermines their value (Hornbeck, 2008). It is thus evident that the region's muddled policy framework makes intra-regional trade difficult and significantly weakens the region's position within the global marketplace.

Over the past two decades as regional creative economy research has grown, it has become apparent that the creative economy's core challenges include: Investment and Financing; Intellectual Property Management; Industry Associations; Business Support Services; Trade and Export Facilitation; Marketing and Distribution; Human Resource Development.; R&D and Data Collection; Cultural Districts; Policy, Legislation and Incentives and Intersectoral Linkages" (Brown, 2011). In order to address these challenges, the region has focused on producing more industry-specific research. The bulk of this research is done within the parameters of trade and policy, and focuses on highlighting industry limitations and providing proof of the urgent need for regional policy that allows creative sector goods, entrepreneurs and services to move more freely across the CARICOM region and across the globe. Still, it is important to note that the region's somewhat singular focus on trade and policy research means that the sector is not researched in breadth as only the economic avenues are pursued, with little attention being paid to social and cultural factors that also contribute to regional cultural development. Furthermore, the research only concentrates on creative sectors that are considered economically viable and ignores the weaker cultural sectors. This practise of singling out 'key' sectors for research means that many sectors of the creative economy remain unexplored and underdeveloped. Still, despite its shortcomings and somewhat limited focus the fact that there has been a greater investment in regional creative economy research is commendable and signals that there is hope for expanding research perspectives in the coming years.

2.2 Exploring sector-specific industry research

One of the defining characteristics of the Caribbean creative economy is the complex way in which its sectors are interwoven. While relationships among creative sectors are expected, the Caribbean is distinct in terms of the interdependency that some sectors share. Take the common example of the Caribbean's music and festival industries, where "music production in Trinidad and Tobago can be deemed as largely a product of its carnival economy" (Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2006, p.50). As the music sector thrives on live performances, artists release new music prior to a festival since a hit record will drive demand for them to perform during the festival season. In this way, the music and festival sectors are inextricably bound to each other and it is for this reason that they are often researched in tandem. In a similar way, the fashion industry is also linked to the festival industry, since stakeholders often straddle both industries, or at the very least receive a boost in sales due to the numerous events for which patrons purchase garments. As such, it is clear that the region's creative sectors are all intimately linked, however, in an aim to understand the distinctiveness of each of the three sectors that are the focus of this thesis, this chapter will now examine the research that has been produced around each individual sector.

2.2.1 *Music research in the Caribbean*

The music industry is arguably the Caribbean's strongest creative sector with respect to both regional and international markets. Local music (categorised as world music on the global market) has been enjoying an upsurge in popularity, largely due to the easy access facilitated by digitalisation. While the cumulative earnings of the Caribbean's music industry has not yet been determined, it is estimated that Jamaica now earns over US two million dollars per year in music exports and currently holds the record for "highest per capita studio rate" worldwide (Caribbean Export Development Agency, 2016, p. 72). Given the rate of production, the

volume of content and the sector's earnings, it is unsurprising that music remains the most researched regional creative sector, not only in a local context, but also within broader academic circles, as it is the sector that is predominantly profiled in global creative economy analyses.¹⁹

Research conducted by the CRNM, identifies six areas of 'economic activity' for the regional music sector (See Figure 3 below), of which production, music publishing, and live performance are the core sectors for generating returns, while audio-visual production, broadcasting and copyright administration provide support for the industry, however are not principal revenue earners (Nurse et al., 2007). This diagram also includes carnival as a component of the music industry, which coheres with this thesis' earlier claim about the symbiotic relationship the two sectors share. However, while the report recognises the importance of regional festivals in the music production landscape, the report fails to acknowledge that the Caribbean music industry is a seasonal industry.

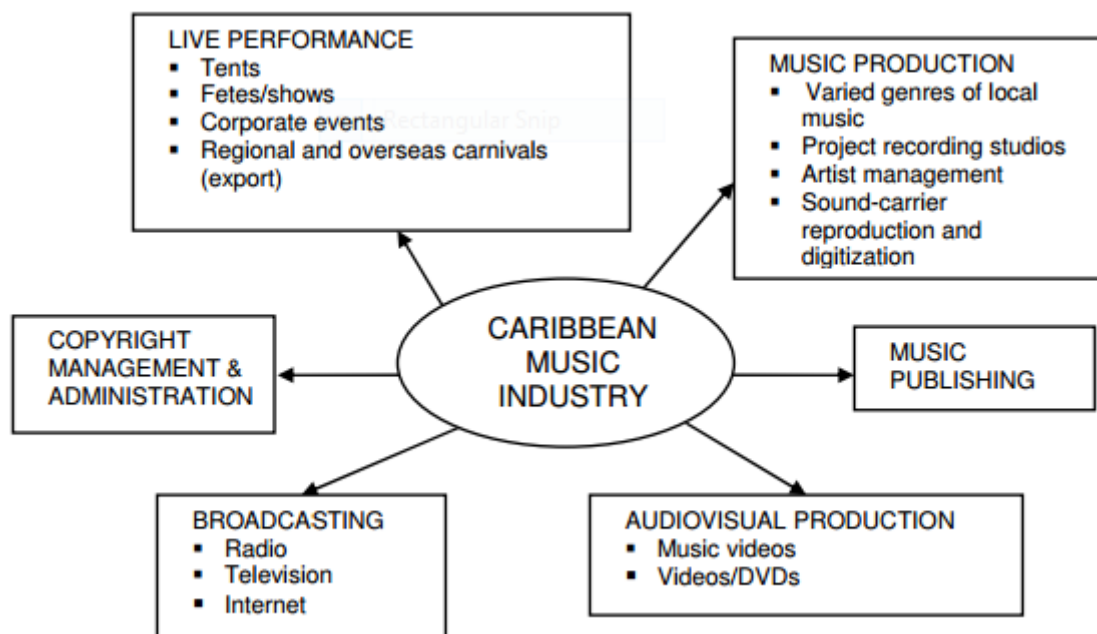


Figure 3: Structure of the Caribbean Music Industry (Nurse et al., 2007. p.30)

¹⁹ See UNCTAD/UNDP *Creative Economy Report 2010* (UNCTAD, 2010) and UNESCO/UNDP *Creative Economy Report 2013 Special Edition* (UNESCO/UNDP, 2013).

In fact many regional reports often overlook the role that fluctuating demand for music plays within the sector. This fluctuation has led to the industry becoming ‘transnational in structure’, since it is dependent upon its diasporic festivals worldwide for its yearlong sustainability (Burke, 2011). Understanding the distinctly competitive and temporally-bound environment within which Caribbean music is developed and the way that it moves across the globe are two factors that are not often explored in research, despite their weighty implications.

Alternatively, Caribbean music research often focuses on the problematizing of the sector and the distinct challenges encountered by stakeholders within the regional context. These ‘weaknesses’ include an informal framework, small market size, crippling levels of piracy, production deficiencies, intellectual property management issues and a lack of investment in human capital (Burke, 2011). Research also suggests the region must tackle “an institutional and commercial bias against indigenous creative content in the home market, discouraging creative entrepreneurship, investment and market development” (UNDP and UNESCO, 2013, p. 82). In fact, this favourable bias towards foreign music and the drastic difference in how it is valued when juxtaposed with local music, is one of the issues explored within this thesis’ analysis chapters.

In recent years, there has also been a small but growing interest in intellectual property (IP), as managing IP remains one of the most detrimental shortcomings of the regional sectors (Taylor, 2013). Piracy is rampant in the local music sector, with 2004 estimates indicating that piracy cost the Trinidad and Tobago music sector TT\$300 million or US\$48.3million per year (Burke, 2011). In the early 2000s there were calls for the institution of ‘anti-piracy campaigns’ to strengthen institutional barriers and shift the public’s perceptions around illegally accessed music, but with the growth of technology and e-commerce, it has become an even greater challenge for the region (UNCTAD, 2002; Nurse, 2001a). Still, despite developing copyright

regimes and legislature, the region has yet to come up with an enforceable solution for targeting the piracy and IP violations that cripple this industry.

That is not to say that music industry research is short on recommendations. The Jamaican government's 'National Strategy & Action Plan to further develop the Jamaican Music Industry' (Brown, 2004), offers a string of recommendations for bolstering the local economy. They include improving human resource development, training and technical assistance; institutional strengthening and capacity building; copyright administration, publishing and anti-piracy measures; data collection; marketing and distribution; product development; legal and policy frameworks; financing and business support services; infrastructure and venues; and sector linkages and regional collaboration (Brown, 2004 p.7). However, most interestingly, the plan suggests that Jamaica could increase its market share "through a better structured, targeted and effective system of marketing and promotion" (Brown, 2004 p.21), a strategy that can be interpreted as akin to branding.

The '*Creative Economy Report 2013 Special Edition*' also dictated that the Caribbean's problems are "compounded by uncompetitive packaging and branding, weak marketing and poor distribution" (UNDP and UNESCO 2013, p.82). The report draws on the example of Jamaica's strongest brand, the world-renowned musical legend Bob Marley. Hailed as the founding father of reggae music, his work, ideas and image have attained iconic status. However, this undeniably powerful brand is not managed by the Jamaican government, as the Marley brands and museum (which is Kingston's biggest tourist attraction) were funded privately by Bob Marley's family as the government had declined to invest. As Keith Nurse illustrates in this Brand Jamaica case study, the family does now work in conjunction with the Jamaica Tourist Board and Jamaica Cultural Development Commission for some events, but sole ownership, economic proceeds and control rest with the Marley Board of Directors. This case study is significant because it exemplifies the fact that regional governments do not

recognise the value of brands, nor do they see the value in injecting investment into local brands, even in an extreme case where the brand has a proven track record and limitless potential. It is clear then that in order to successfully create and maintain local creative brands, the region must also buy-in to these brands and not solely focus on selling these brands on the global market. Understanding the relationship that Caribbean people have with indigenous creative products and brands is critical to understanding the regional creative economy and as such it has become one of the central tasks of this thesis.

2.2.2. Festival research in the Caribbean

The festival industry is vital to the Caribbean economy as it contributes significantly to the tourism industry that is the backbone of many island states. A 2001 economic impact assessment once separated Caribbean festivals into three groups: Carnival festivals, indigenous festivals and tourist-oriented music festivals (Nurse, 2001b). However, today these distinctions have blurred, since regardless of their origins, all festivals serve the same purpose, which is to “give a fillip to the entertainment sector through creating new clients, markets, and media exposure, thereby facilitating export expansion. They also stimulate infrastructure development, heritage conservation, and investment in the arts” (Nurse et al, 2007 p. 174).

In discussing festival research in the Caribbean, a good starting point is the Caribbean Festival of Arts (CARIFESTA). Launched in 1972, CARIFESTA, is an inter-governmental cultural event produced by CARICOM, which aims to “depict the life of the people of the region, their heroes, morale, myth, traditions, beliefs, creativeness, and ways of expression; show the similarities and differences of the people of the Caribbean generally; create a climate in which art can flourish so that artists would be encouraged to return to their homeland; and awaken a regional identity in literature” (CARICOM, 2011). However, this festival has consistently failed to meet these aims as it is stymied by the absence of regional collaboration and

lacklustre participation on the part of both nations and spectators. In 2004, CARICOM commissioned industry expert Keith Nurse to create 'Reinventing CARIFESTA: A Strategic Plan'. His report proposed strategic changes to the business model; the governance and decision-making process; programming and marketing; and finance and economic planning (Nurse, 2004). However, this report, like many others, explores marketing but fails to acknowledge the role of brand and cultural identity within this equation.

The report also highlights the importance of regional collaboration. Researchers at the University of the West Indies (UWI) Institute of International Relations noted that key factors that affect regional integration are poor leadership, deficient funds, and failure to effectively implement decisions and disputes over jurisdiction overlaps (Bishop et al., 2011). After forty-four (44) years, little has changed in the organisation and production of CARIFESTA and its continued failure underscores both the critical role that regional integration plays in the success of cultural events, as well as the inability of regional organisations to facilitate integration. These issues undoubtedly have significant implications for this thesis that explores brand within a regional context.

Apart from CARIFESTA, regional festival research is primarily focused on the carnival industry. The national strategic plan for Trinidad and Tobago's entertainment industry identified six areas of economic activity for the Festival/Carnival Industry (See Figure 4 below). As the diagram illustrates, the festival industry is a key economic driver for several ancillary sectors such as the hotel sector, the airline sector, the food and beverage sector, as well as of course the music industry. Given its fiscal importance, it is unsurprising that the majority of festival research is usually modelled as economic impact assessments.

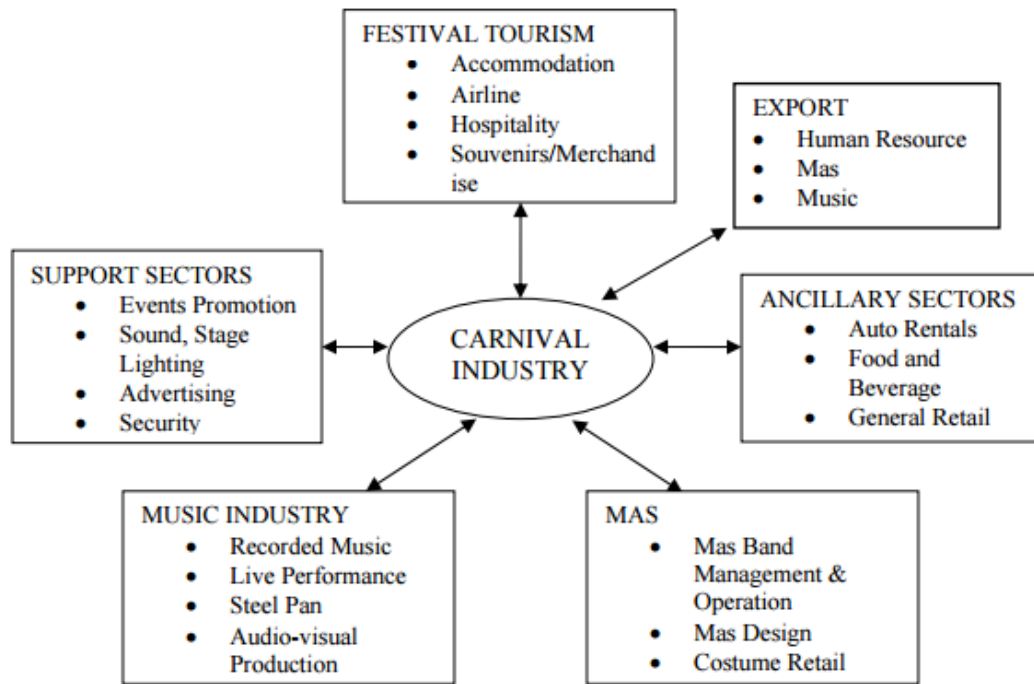


Figure 4: Structure of the Carnival Industry (Ministry of Trade and Industry 2006. p.70)

It has been argued that this focus on economic impact stems from a drive to highlight positive outcomes, as opposed to concentrating on political, social and environmental impacts where more negative consequences may be emphasized (Tull, 2012). Whatever the motive, it is clear that interests in festival research are very streamlined as local, regional and transnational organisations are primarily concerned with the financial returns the sector can generate.

Alongside this growing dependence on festival tourism, each island has been investing in the creation of economic analyses specific to its national festivals. The list of regional research conducted includes: Economic impact assessment for Cayman Island's Pirates Week (Nurse and Tull, 2002); St. Kitts Music Festival 2003 (Sahely and Skerritt, 2003), The economic impact of Junkanoo in the Bahamas (Bethel, 2014); Grenada Spice Mas: An economic impact assessment (Nurse and Tull, 2012); and The world creole music festival: An economic impact assessment (Nurse and Tull, 2006). As is evident, the majority of festival research has focused specifically on carnival, and as home to the region's largest festival – the Trinidad and Tobago

Carnival,²⁰ the nation has invested the most in festival research. In fact in 2014 Trinidad's Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism published a 'blueprint' for carnival. This document, the first of its kind in the region, adopts a new perspective using an event management approach that focuses on planning, managing and producing a mega-event like carnival within the local context.

Within the Carnival framework, masquerade or 'mas' has become a key research area, because of its' earning potential. 'Mas' refers to the Carnival costumes²¹ worn throughout the street parades that are the highlight of the festival season. With the outsourcing of labour overseas and the low reproduction costs, costume making has become the sector's most lucrative commercial trade. Cultural analyst Suzanne Burke recently completed research on the Trinidad carnival masquerade sector and through interviews with masquerade bands, she was able to map key data regarding services, employees, customer base, business activities and involvement in overseas carnivals etc. (Burke, n.d). At present, it is estimated that the production costs of a mas band can cost anywhere from 35,000 TT for small bands of 50-150 people to TT3 million for all-inclusive²² 'supersized' bands where masqueraders number from 3000-10,000 (Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2006, p. 71). However while production costs were accessible, overall revenue could not be calculated because local mas providers refused to disclose that information, possibly because corporate sponsorship is a key element within the mas ecosystem and thus the data is sensitive. Moreover, as research has found that 56% of

²⁰ The Trinidad and Tobago Carnival is a two to three month long celebration culminating in a two day street parade where masquerade bands take to the streets. There are numerous events leading up to parade of the bands including Panorama (the national Steel pan competition), The King and Queens costume competition, countless fetes (parties) and music competitions for the indigenous soca, calypso and chutney genres.

²¹ See Appendix C and D for photographs of traditional and contemporary carnival masquerade costumes.

²² An all-inclusive event provides patrons with food and alcoholic beverages in addition to the standard entertainment.

local mas bands participate in the diasporic Carnival festivals, of which there are over 70 worldwide,²³ it again makes revenue difficult to track (Burke, n.d).

In many cases economic impact is usually measured through a tourism framework by reviewing markers such as visitor arrivals, hotel and accommodation occupancy and increases in international media coverage. However, researchers have also been trying to focus more closely on tracking auxiliary income streams. For example, the paper ‘Money Matters: In Trinidad and Tobago Carnival’ tracked the ‘money flows’ or revenue streams for Carnival, including expenses such as music production costs, fees for support staff and services, cost for social services during the festival and administrative costs (Tull, 2005). Similarly, a 2015 mapping exercise of Trinidad and Tobago’s cultural sector polled festival stakeholders and was able to discern previously underreported data such as the cost of putting on Carnival fetes and events, which is now known to range from 250,000 TT dollars for small events (under 1000 patrons) to over TT 1 million for larger events with over 10,000 patrons (Burke, 2015).

However, while these recent mapping exercises are useful, they are all still proof that the region still limits its creative economy research to an economic perspective. In her academic article “Counting (on) the economics of Carnival”, cultural sector analyst Jo-anne Tull writes about “the notion that cultural expressions ought not to be subjected to the rigors of economic measuring and analysis – that it is not possible to place a dollar value on carnival, and to do so can affect its ‘spirit’ ”, a belief that is clearly not prevalent within the region (Tull, 2009b, p. 3). Tull goes on to advocate for a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods to be employed while ‘measuring’ Carnival and other cultural activities. Still, more than just a question of methodological choices, the region’s inability to move past economic analyses means that it fails to adequately reflect the breadth of contemporary challenges that hinder these sectors.

²³ See Appendix E for a list of diaspora Carnivals

For example, there have been growing concerns over the fact that traditional mas is dying and being usurped by the ‘bikini and beads’ pretty mas [depicted in Appendix D] (Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2006; Tull, 2005). However, national agencies have yet to invest the time and resources to investigate the cultural and social implications of this trend. Nations have also expressed little interest in the national public view of these trends associated with their national festivals. It is very rare to find a festival analysis that consults the consumer, since data and conclusions are usually drawn from stakeholders who have a fiscal interest in the festival. A recent King’s College research project titled ‘Carnival Futures: Notting Hill Carnival 2020’ was one of the first to use participant data to identify the festival’s core values and discover the vision that the festival’s patrons held for the festival’s future, but this study was conducted in the UK, not the Caribbean (Ferdinand, 2013).

Ultimately, it is clear that there is a need for new approaches for sector analysis. Within this, there is a space for brand research, particularly in light of “masquerade bands’ increasing emphasis on the intangible, experiential aspects of their product offering rather than the physical, tangible ones” (Ferdinand, 2014, p.9). As Burke notes “festival organisers place a great deal of focus on creating meaning with the festival product” (Burke 2015, p. 99), and this shift signifies that they have understood that intangible factors such as brand play a significant role in their sector. This thesis hopes to build on this understanding and produce research that reflects the region’s complex and evolving festival sector.

2.2.3 *Fashion research in the Caribbean*

The fashion industry in the Caribbean is one of the most promising creative sectors. Statistical data shows that in Trinidad and Tobago²⁴ sales from local fashion labels totalled TT 26.5 million, with the industry employing approximately 3,700 people, although the data does not clarify whether the figures reflect full-time, part-time or seasonal employment (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, 2011). However, as the sector is young, it is not well developed, so much so that a 2015 report produced by Sistema Económico Latinoamericano y del Caribe (SELA) argued that the Caribbean does not yet have a fashion ‘industry’, because while there is undeniable talent, many other components of the value chain²⁵ are missing and thus the region cannot compete on the international market with regard to quality, quantity, and production (SELA, 2015). Still, despite a decline in garment production many local and regional analysts have been turning their attention to this sector as forecasting has shown that it has the greatest untapped potential for both public and private sector investment (NIHERST, 2007).

Much like the music and festival industries, the fashion research produced to date also focuses heavily on the challenges the sector faces. A PEST analysis of the sector highlighted considerable issues such as low production levels, accreditation for designers, standardization of Caribbean sizes, the mass importation of garments from China and the usual trade issues (NIHERST, 2007; Nurse et al., 2007, pp. 160-162). The sector is also troubled by the lack of protection for designers as they are particularly susceptible to “creative theft” because of “the intangibility of their cultural content, which is generally protected by copyright” (Nurse et al.,

²⁴ Statistics for the fashion industries across the remainder of CARICOM was unavailable.

²⁵ According to the CRNM a critical analysis of the fashion industry’s value chain must include: Fashion/apparel designers; accessories designers; fashion stylists; hair stylists; models; trend forecasters; fashion school facilitators; retailers; textile suppliers; fashion editors; fashion magazine publishers; model agents; fashion photographers; designers agents; fashion cooperatives/association; fashion show producers; casting agents; shoot location production managers; photo labs rental and other post-production facilities; photo equipment rental and musical stylists (Nurse et al., 2007)

2007, p. 145). Across the globe, ‘knock-offs’ (low-cost duplicates of luxury goods) have become hugely popular especially given the accessibility and transferability afforded by advanced technology. Enforcing intellectual property rights remains a challenge, particularly because of weak IP legal frameworks and the underutilisation of the structures that are already in place (Barrère and Delabruyère, 2011). In fact, within the Caribbean, many designers have simply resorted to using public shaming to hold poachers accountable in the court of public opinion, as there are no other avenues for compensation or restitution.

Apart from the above, divisiveness and competitiveness are also additional factors that cripple both local and regional fashion sectors. As there are several national committees but no government-sanctioned regional committees solely dedicated to advancing Caribbean fashion, resources are not pooled and agendas can diverge. In his paper on exploring the economic and trade policy dimensions in CARICOM, Nurse referenced this divisiveness, stating that “Policies for trade, industry, and tourism, to name a few, are not always coordinated and therefore inhibit the overall impact and/or applicability of government initiatives. There is a clear need for the harmonisation of national and regional initiatives and cross-cutting commitments” (Nurse, 2009, p. 19). Consider for example, the Jamaica National Export Strategy (a group comprised of several governmental trade and investment stakeholders) that states that their vision is that Jamaica becomes the fashion centre of the Caribbean. This easily becomes a source of conflict because the same goal was also articulated by Trinidad and Tobago fashion stakeholders in their Haute Caribe promotional video produced in 2012. Again, it is evident that a lack of collaboration and coordination, fuelled by the competitiveness, will continue to be a hindrance to the advancement of regional initiatives.

However of all the challenges that plague the regional fashion economy, the most difficult may be the biases of the Caribbean people. As SELA reports, “The Caribbean faces an issue of cultural confidence. Domestic markets too often favour foreign brands simply because they

are foreign. Those who want to enter the luxury market are not given encouragement or support because it is not felt that anything manufactured in the Caribbean can be of quality” (SELA 2015, p. 9). This deeply ingrained belief that regional products are not up to par with their international counterparts undermines the entire economy. The value that Caribbean people place on local goods has become a significant impediment in the industry’s development and this is a theme that is deeply examined throughout the course of this thesis.

Brand in Fashion Industry research

As fashion is the youngest creative sector, the research has taken a more contemporary approach and as such, brand and the role it can play in industry has been much more present in this sector’s research than in music and festivals. Take for example the ‘Strategic Plan’ for the fashion industry published by the Trinidad and Tobago Coalition of service industries (TTCSI) in 2015. The plan presented three strategic choices for strengthening the fashion sector, one of which (Choice 2) was using brand as a means of differentiation (See Figure 5 below). The branding option requires “strong national brands” that are imprinted on cultural products, as well as a commitment to the “strategic promotion of the Caribbean aesthetic” from industry players (TTCSI p. 59). However the plan would entail overcoming a variety of obstacles including a lack of buy-in for the brand, personal conflicts and a sense of divisiveness between stakeholders, as well as a lack of regional collaboration and opposition on the basis of preference for national brands (TTCSI, p. 60). The consultancy group who prepared the plan ultimately decided to recommend ‘Possibility 4’ (See Figure 5), however in a section entitled ‘Quick Wins’²⁶ the plan suggests requesting proposals for the development of a ‘Caribbean aesthetic’ brand, as they explain that even simply starting discussion around the

²⁶ ‘Quick Wins’ was used to refer to a subset of strategies whose could produce significant results within a short window of time.

idea of the brand will create awareness and energise stakeholders about the importance of branding.

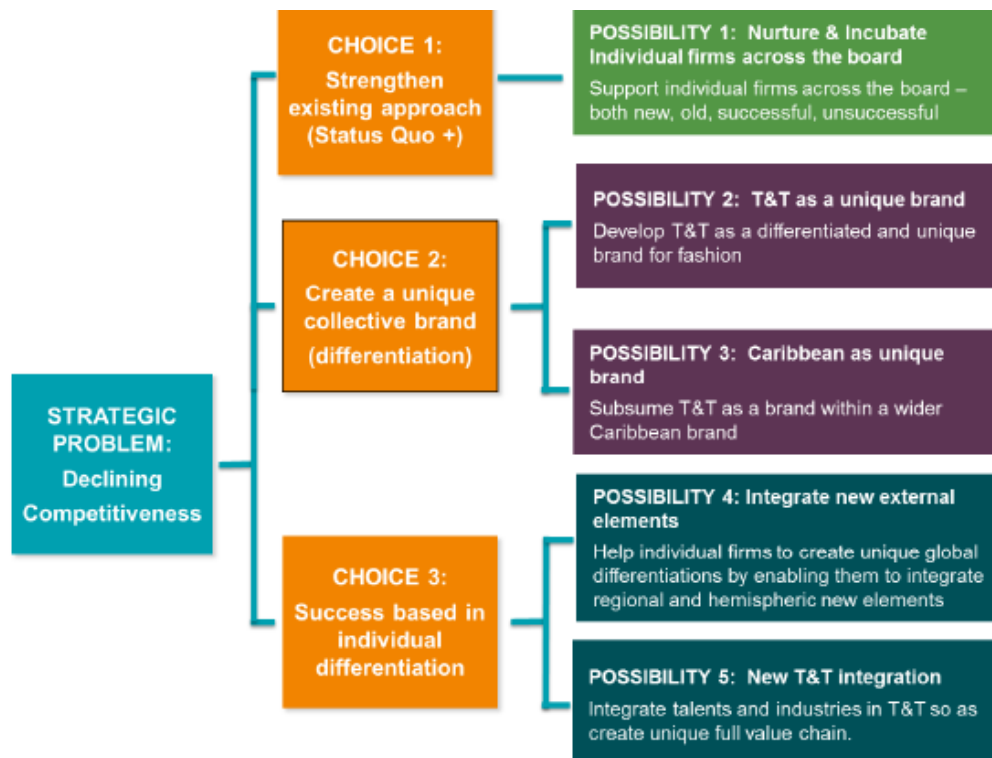


Figure 5: Strategic Choices and Possibilities for the Trinidad and Tobago Fashion Industry (ITCSI, 2015 p.57)

Recently, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) published a new trade and policy document focusing on the creative sector's role in the move to diversify the economy. The paper focused on proving the value of the creative industries in regional development, explaining that they fulfilled three crucial developmental needs: providing opportunities for sustainable production; generating high quality employment and helping alleviate debt through increased exports (ECLAC, 2012). However, most importantly it stressed that the creative industries present the best opportunity for the region to establish a strong Caribbean brand. The notion that brand could be one of the principle pillars in the global success of the Caribbean's creative products and services, is the central argument of

this thesis and brand's appearance in regional cultural policy shows that its relevance is finally being acknowledged.

Branding is also discussed in the final report for the SELA's 'Seminar on the Apparel Industry and Economic Development in the Caribbean'. Alongside suggestions regarding government financing, manufacturing and education and training, the report also recommends turning to brand, stating that "The aim should be to develop a Caribbean brand and create visibility for regional designers"(SELA, 2014, p.8). Again however, it appears that the conference did not provide any guidelines regarding the process of brand development.

Additionally, many other research projects have not mentioned branding specifically but have made mention of marketing,²⁷ a closely related concept. Take for example the research conducted by The Jamaica National Export Strategy (2014), which discusses the value chain and mentions the critical role that marketing can play. Similarly in the WIPO mapping research on the region's creative economy, attorney Lloyd Stanbury presents marketing as a key element in value chain, although he never mentions the concept of branding, an oversight that is particularly ironic given that the fashion industry is an industry built on the strength of retail brands (Stanbury, 2006).

Still, it is encouraging to note the increased presence of marketing and brand discourse in regional research. In fact, it has even been suggested that the fashion industry can contribute to nation branding, given that "a vibrant fashion industry has significant potential in terms of attracting positive media attention, destination branding and marketing. Trinidad and Tobago has been recognised for its design talent. It could also be marketed as the Fashion Capital of the Caribbean" (Reis, 2007, p.11). Emerging strategies such as these signal that the importance

²⁷ Marketing can be defined as "the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large" (American Marketing Association, 2013).

of brand in the fashion industry and the larger creative economy is slowly being acknowledged by policy makers, stakeholders and researchers alike.

Conclusion

As this chapter has illustrated, the Caribbean creative economy is still young and thus is still building its research infrastructure. To date, there is not a large volume of local research, largely because as is evidenced above, there is a very small pool of researchers who are responsible for the bulk of research coming out of the Caribbean and they are producing this research within a space where most government agencies are still unwilling to invest in creative economy research. In addition to this, contextual restrictions with regards to resources, manpower and the directives of research sponsors means that researchers have more often than not been pressured into adopting a singular perspective where they evaluate the creative sectors solely within an economic framework, producing either industry mapping or trade-centered research. This chapter's examination of the research surrounding each of this thesis core sectors (music, festivals and fashion) has also further illustrated that the breadth of regional research has also been quite limited since the focus is placed on the region's most lucrative creative sectors, based within the region's most influential nations.

All of the abovementioned has resulted in a research landscape that is largely dominated by economic analyses. In highlighting this, this chapter has exposed a gap in academic scholarship, which can further validate the significance of this thesis. Furthermore, in underscoring the absence of social and cultural analyses within regional creative economy research, this chapter also draws attention to the fact that regional policy makers believe that the primary purpose of the creative economy is to serve as another pathway for economic development. Acknowledging this bias and understanding the dominant attitude towards the creative economy is of course critical for both appreciating the parameters which confine

industry research and grasping the context within which this thesis is being produced. Having now explored the relevant literature surrounding the region's creative economy, the following chapter will proceed to lay out the theoretical framework for this thesis.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework

This chapter outlines the concepts and theoretical underpinnings that will play a critical role in this research and provides the theoretical foundation upon which the claims presented throughout this thesis can be substantiated. The first section of the chapter (Section 3.1) introduces the concept of the creative economy. It sets out to redefine the creative economy as a symbolic economy, a perceptual shift that is necessary if the reader is to appreciate the symbolic nature of brand and understand the unique perspective from which this research should be interpreted. The chapter then proceeds to examine the distinct characteristics and value attached to the symbolic goods that are exchanged across the global creative economy.

The second portion of the theoretical review (Section 3.2) introduces brand from a traditional perspective, signalling that its linear interpretation may prove problematic. Subsequently, Section 3.3 illustrates the complexity of brand, exploring the ways in which it is interpreted for the purpose of this thesis. It defines brand and examines the symbolic, cultural and strategic roles that brand plays within the Caribbean's creative economy. Following this, the final section (Section 3.4) explores the concept of nation brand. Through discussions around national identity and 'Caribbeanness' the chapter seeks to dissect the role of the nation brand within the context of the regional creative economy. By its close, this chapter should explain the theoretical foundations of this work, further refine its scope for the reader, and ultimately clarify where this thesis is positioned amid contemporary creative economy debates.

3.1 Redefining the creative economy as a symbolic economy

As mentioned in the introduction chapter, the United Nations defines the creative economy in terms of “the interface between creativity, culture, economics and technology in a contemporary world dominated by images, sounds, texts and symbols” (UNCTAD, 2013). From the UNCTAD’s perspective, it is an interdisciplinary field characterised by its own unique set of rules and ever shifting parameters. As with any emergent field, there have been varying perspectives on how best to define and research the creative economy, and it is important for this chapter to first discuss these perspectives, so that the reader can understand the researcher’s interpretation of the creative economy and the positioning of this thesis amongst the growing research field.

One way that academics and other industry stakeholders (particularly governments) theorise the creative economy is simply as an economic system made up of varying branches of creative industries. In the pivotal text *The Cultural Industries: How people make money from ideas* (2007), drawing on data from the top global markets, Howkins defined the global creative economy as a composite of fifteen cores sectors.²⁸ Since then, as discussed in the introduction chapter, various models of the creative economy have been developed, many of which use their own classification systems.²⁹ While it is useful to be able to assess the creative industries through these clearly delineated frameworks, for the purposes of this research the creative economy must be seen as more than just a diverse and rapidly expanding economic system.

Another way creative economy research is often approached is through creative labour. Take for example Richard Florida’s work on the creative class, which shifts the focus from the

²⁸ Core sectors: Advertising, architecture, art, crafts, design, fashion, film, music, performing arts (theatre, opera, dance, ballet), publishing, research and development, software, toys and games, TV and radio, and video games.

²⁹ Refer to Appendix A for depictions of the DCMS model (Department of Culture Media and Sport, 2001), the concentric circle models (Throsby, 2001), the symbolic texts model (Hesmondhalgh, 2013), and the World Intellectual Property Organisation copyright model (WIPO, 2015).

sectors of cultural production, onto the people who facilitate this production. His work differentiates between the ‘working’ and ‘service’ classes where the work is routine and heavily dependent on the physical labour, in comparison to the creative class, where workers are “are paid to use their minds – the full scope of their cognitive and social skills” (Florida, 2002, p.9). This perspective greatly expands the notion of the creative economy, since it cannot then just be limited to a few core sectors, as creative work can be found wherever creative people are found. Higgs and Cunningham’s creative trident model (see Figure 6 below), reflects a similar position and offers a more expansive view of the diversity of roles that contribute to the creative workforce, accounting for “the core creative industries (Specialists), plus the creative occupations employed in other industries (Embedded), plus the non-creative (better titled business and support) occupations employed in creative industries who are often responsible for managing, accounting for, and technically supporting creative activity” (Higgs, and Cunningham, 2008, p. 17).

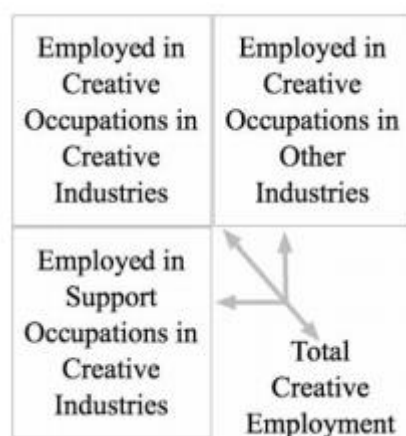


Figure 6: The Creative Trident (Higgs and Cunningham, 2008, p.26)

Whilst this thesis does not explore the creative industries from this perspective, this model of the creative workforce has informed the selection of interviewees for this thesis. As will be explained in the following methods chapter, this thesis draws on the opinions of a diverse

range of stakeholders, many of whom may not seem to work in overtly creative roles, yet still play an invaluable role in the workings of the creative economy.

Apart from the above, there are a few other approaches to exploring the creative economy worth mentioning. There is the creative cities³⁰ approach that theorises that the success of a city no longer lies solely in its location or resources but rather in the creativity of the people who reside in it (Landry, 2008). This perspective acknowledges the role of the geography in creativity, and highlights the fact that creative production is therefore shaped by the social, cultural and political influences of the physical space, an idea that is of course relevant to this thesis. There are also those who propose that the creative economy should be defined by the distinct economic principles³¹ that differentiate it from other sectors of society (Caves, 2000). More recently, researchers have also adopted a more business-centered approach, focusing on the relationship between management and creativity as the starting point for their research (Bilton and Cummings, 2014). Still, all of the taxonomies listed above, while useful, are not specifically suited to this thesis where the focus on brand necessitates that the reader's understanding of the creative economy is expanded to reflect the more intangible and symbolic nature of the creative sectors.

A symbolic economy

This thesis falls within what can be described as the symbolic economy approach, “where there is room for an appreciation of the softer, symbolic, aesthetic, more affective forms of knowledge, alongside or even entangled within, the resolutely cognitive” (Allen in Du Gay and Pryke, 2002, p. 39). This concept of the symbolic economy has emerged due to what

³⁰ For further information, see the UNESCO Creative Cities Network which was formed in 2004 to ensure that creativity is incorporated into national developmental goals, as well as facilitate connectivity amongst the world's creative cities.

³¹ According to Caves, the seven economic properties that defined the creative economy are: the Nobody knows property; the Art for art' sake property; the Motley crew property; the infinite variety property; the A list/B list property; the time flies property and the ars longa property (Caves, 2000).

academic Lash and Urry explained as the ‘culturalisation of the economy’. In their text *Economies of signs and space* (1994), they argue that while the creative industries have long been dependent on an aesthetic sensibility, other sectors have only recently caught on with the result being that “what is increasingly being produced is not objects but signs” (Lash and Urry, 1994, p. 15). They propose that there are two types of signs, signs with cognitive content (informational goods) or with aesthetic content (postmodern goods) and that increasingly what we now witness is the aestheticisation of most ‘material’ objects, during their production, exchange or consumption (Lash and Urry, 1994). This framework works well for this thesis, because branding can be interpreted as a means of aestheticization since it is responsible for attaching sign-value to goods, given that in many cases, it is the brand as opposed to the physical cultural product that holds value.

Other cultural analysts have also discussed the idea of the symbolic economy. Take for example, Reich’s work in *The work of Nations* (1992), where he too paints a picture of an economy that has morphed into a space of symbolic negotiation. In it he describes a scenario where there are three classes for workers in the modern economy: routine production services, in-person services and symbolic-analytic services (Reich, 1992). He describes the pivotal role that cultural analysts play where they “solve, identify and broker problems by manipulating symbols” (Reich, 1992 p. 178). The notion of symbolic analysts is particularly relevant when discussing industry stakeholders across the creative industries, raising questions around who are the key analysts responsible for the manipulation of symbols and how does their manipulation affect the value and exchange of cultural goods.

Sharon Zukin’s work has also reflected on the impact of the symbolic economy, particularly in relation to the organisation and construction of cities. In her text *The culture of cities* (1995) she discusses changes in the role of the symbolic economy particularly in terms of “its symbiosis of image and product, the scope and scale of selling images on a national and even global

level, and the role of the symbolic economy in speaking for, or representing the city (Zukin 1995, p.8). While this thesis does not focus on public spaces, Zukin's line of inquiry is worth mentioning because of its parallels with this research that similarly focuses on national and regional representation, albeit through brand.

It is for the reasons listed above, that this thesis emphasises the importance of viewing the creative economy as a symbolic economy. Still, some have argued that defining the creative economy as a symbolic economy inevitably negates the symbolic activities of alternative sectors. As Allen writes, "any simple binary understanding of economic knowledge between, say, the cognitive and the aesthetic, or between the material and the symbolic, fails to apprehend the richness of the knowledge in each and every area of the economy"(Allen in Du Gay and Pryke, 2002 p.40). Whilst this critique's claims that every sector is founded on multiple types of knowledge is reasonable, it can be argued that the creative sectors have a much higher involvement with symbolic forms of knowledge as compared with other sectors. In fact, even amongst the creative industries, there are clear differences in the level of symbolic knowledge inherent in the sector. Now whilst this research uses the UNCTAD classification of creative industries³² in this discussion around symbolic value, the symbolic texts model which separates the sectors into core, peripheral and borderline cultural industries³³ must be mentioned. The model is devised around the principle that "the generation or communication of symbolic meaning is the defining concept of culture and the economic value of goods is derived from, or reflects, their cultural value" (ECLAC, 2012, p.13). In short, this model acknowledges the distinctions in symbolic value that can exist across cultural fields and one could infer that even larger disparities can occur outside the

³² Refer to Chapter One (Figure 1) for the rationale behind the selection of this model.

³³ The core cultural industries are advertising, film, internet, music, publishing and television, radio, video and computer games. The peripheral creative industries are the creative arts and the borderline industries are consumer, electronics, fashion, software and sports (Hesmondhalgh, 2007, pp. 12-15.)

cultural sectors. Thus whilst all sectors may trade in symbolic knowledge, the volume and significance of the symbolic knowledge within the creative economy is unparalleled.

An economy trading in symbolic goods

Research on the symbolic economy must also hinge on an understanding of the symbolic goods and services in which it trades. Symbolic goods can be defined as those whose “value is primarily dependent upon the play of symbolic meanings. Their value is dependent upon the end user (viewer, audience, reader, consumer) decoding and finding value within these meanings; the value of “symbolic goods” is therefore dependent on the user’s perceptions as much as on the creation of original content, and that value may or may not translate into a financial return” (Bilton and Leary, 2002, p. 50).

Working with this definition, value or rather negotiating value is at the core of the symbolic exchanges that occur within the creative economy. Negotiating the symbolic value of creative goods is particularly tricky because unlike most commercial goods their value shifts dependent upon the context within which they are measured and ultimately their market value is not indicative of their real or actual value (Snowball, 2008). Creative goods are also unique in that they do not inevitably depreciate in value after use. In fact, they can often be ephemeral, with their transitory nature excluding them from the conventional laws of supply and demand. With such distinct features, relying on predictive economic markers, standardized indicators or traditional principles for evaluating the value proves inadequate, as even the consumer’s willingness to pay cannot be used as a yardstick for value (Towse, 2011, p.127).

Still, there have been many debates surrounding how best to define the types of symbolic value present across the creative economy. Cultural economist David Throsby outlines six types of value: aesthetic value, spiritual value, social value, historical value, authenticity value and symbolic value, stating that any work can have multiple types of value inherent in it. He

defines symbolic value by saying “if an individual’s reading of an artwork involves the extraction of meaning, then the work’s symbolic value embraces the nature of the meaning conveyed by the work and its value to the consumer” (Throsby, 2001.p. 29). Beckert (2011) explores a different typology of value and posits that goods can hold only two types of value: physical and symbolic. His text, *The worth of goods* (2011), further explains that symbolic value can be further deconstructed into two more types of value: imaginative and positional value. The positional value of a good is determined by narratives ascribed to the good, which have been constructed and collectively agreed upon by that society or community. Derived from the work of Pierre Bourdieu and other social anthropologists, it explores value as something that is ascribed to a product and bound by the context of that specific society. On the other hand, imaginative value is not so much a result of collective agreement but rather is borne out of the personal ascriptions that the individual has attached to good. The imaginative “comes into play when the owner sees the good as a ‘connection’ to espoused ideals symbolically represented in the object” (Beckert, 2011, pp. 110). Despite their difference both theories of value share a common thread, which is that they are both founded upon the idea that the value of the good transcends the material constitution of an object, and that is the core tenant that defines symbolic value.

Still, the relationship between value and creative goods remains complex, as it has been argued that, even the act of determining the value of cultural goods is not without consequence since “the rigor of being placed in the sphere of commerce, measured, compared, discussed, priced and treated like any other commodity may very well affect its [the cultural good’s] subsequent evaluation” (Klamer, 2011). Here Klamer argues that traditional approaches of valorisation push cultural goods into the realm of commodification which could prove detrimental to the inherent symbolic value that they hold. Still, a symbolic economy is still an economy and thus appraisal and exchanges are inevitable.

With this new understanding of the symbolic economy and symbolic goods, it is clear that the creative economy is not merely a space for the trading of goods and services, but must also be viewed as symbolic economy where symbols and meanings are also negotiated, exchanged, bought and sold. Understanding the concept of symbolic value is critical since this thesis focuses on brand which is one of the agents that imbues a product with symbolic value, transforming it from a commercial product into a symbolic good, and where even a place or region is subject to the symbolic operation of brand. In acknowledging the interplay of brand and symbolic value and the distinct way in which these elements work within the symbolic economy, it is hoped that the reader can more fully appreciate the arguments raised in this thesis.

3.2 Brand: A traditional perspective

Branding, much like the creative industries, is a fairly young and multi-faceted discipline. However, the trend of marking goods to show ownership is a timeworn practice with archaeological evidence of brand marks on Ancient Roman pottery and 17th and 18th century European porcelain and tapestries. Still it was the 19th century that really birthed branding, as the industrial revolution became a catalyst for commercial and private sector growth which indelibly transformed the social, economic and political landscape. These transformations created a space where mass communication and mass consumption grew exponentially and it was within this new framework, that some of today's most successful commercial brands were born. Subsequently, during the 1950's brand began to gain prominence as a research field amidst growing interest in consumer behaviour during the manufacturing era (Levy and Gordon, 1955).

Since its inception the scope and nature of brand research has continually shifted, but it has become almost universally accepted that anything and everything can be branded, be it

physical products, services, retailers and distributors, religions, people, organisations, sports, arts, entertainment, geographic locations, ideas and causes (Keller, 2008). Today, the standard commercial definition of a brand is a “name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition” (Keller, 2008, p.2). This definition, provided by the American Marketing Association, solidifies the fact that brand is now conventionally represented as a commercial commodity.

However, while the impact of brand on trade and industry cannot be overlooked, the role of brand extends beyond economics. This thesis posits that interpreting brand in such a linear fashion proves problematic because brand far surpasses just the signage, name and physical attributes that differentiate a product. Brand also involves creating a ‘meaning’ behind the brand’s cosmetics markers and developing “a Gestalt for the brand – defined as being ‘the unified physical, psychological or symbolic configuration or mix of elements, that when combined are greater than the sum of the parts’” (Runkel and Brymer, 1997, p.5). As brand expert Douglas Holt explains, “although the product has a name, a trademarked logo, unique packaging and perhaps other unique design features – all aspects we intuitively think of as the brand – the brand does not yet truly exist. Names, logos, and designs are the material markers of the brand, but because the product does not yet have a history however, these markers are empty” (Holt, 2004, p. 3). Advertising guru David Ogilvy also expresses similar sentiments defining brand as “the intangible sum of a product’s attributes: its name, packaging, and price, its history, its reputation, and the way it’s advertised”. Still, while all these definitions do acknowledge the intangibility of brand they still take a somewhat limiting and traditional ‘practical checklist approach to branding’, which does not hold within the context of the creative economy (Schroeder and Salzer-Morlin, 2006). It is for this reason that thesis intends to challenge the limited and oversimplified interpretation of brand that dominates the region,

by illustrating its multidimensionality across the creative economy. The following sections lay the groundwork for this by redefining brand so as to demonstrate its breadth and complexity within the context of the regional creative economy.

3.3 Reimagining brand for the creative economy: A cultural approach

Redefining brand within the context of the creative industries is not about changing the definition of what a brand is, but more so expanding that definition to reflect the multiplicity of roles and interpretations that can be applied to the term. Brands cannot just be explored through the traditional lens since as Schroeder notes “If brands exist as cultural, ideological, and political objects, then brand researchers require tools developed to understand culture, politics, and ideology in conjunction with more typical branding concepts...” (Schroeder and Salzer-Morling, 2006, p. 1). Therefore, given the framework within which this research is being conducted, brand can also be interpreted as a tool that “brings the product into the realm of cultural signification, where it links up with a constellation of culture-specific meanings that are associated with the product” (Danesci, 2006, p. 19). In this way, brand is being re-imagined as a transformative and multi-dimensional tool, one that is visual, symbolic, linguistic and commercial in nature.

The following sections explore the multidimensionality of brand and the various ways that it can be viewed within the context of the creative industries’ symbolic economy. They explore brand in three critical roles: Brand as a symbolic instrument; Brand as medium for reconstructing cultural identity and Brand as strategy.

3.3.1 Brand as a symbolic instrument

Defining the term 'brand' is a difficult task (Stern 2006), even more so when defining it within the context of a specific field of study as this thesis will now attempt to do. While there are numerous ways in which brand can be deconstructed, for the purpose of this thesis, it is first important to illustrate how brand can be viewed as a symbolic instrument. A good starting point for this is to first examine it from a semiotic³⁴ perspective, since at its most basic level brand is a "communicative object" (Schroeder and Salzer-Morling, 2006, p.4). This is because brand is first and foremost, a mental construct, existing in the mind of the individual. As it is not tied to a physical object, but rather to an individual's or market's interpretations of said object, brand can rightfully be interpreted as a sign.³⁵ As semiotic theory has illustrated, signs and "meanings do not exist in any absolute sense, but in relation to other meanings" (Danesci, 2006, p.26). These meanings are part of wider systems of signification (what semioticians assert are systematically ordered codes). Thus the codes for understanding brands are "the set of culture-specific meanings and attendant mental constructs that are evoked by a brand" (Danesci, 2006p. 29).

Consequently, it can be argued that brand is ultimately a product of communication. As Julien and Arnould write "To talk of brands as cultural forms is to acknowledge that branding is a specific form of communication, which tells stories in the context of products and services, addresses people as consumers, and promises to fulfil unmet desires and needs. In other words, branding is a specific symbolic form, a particular way of talking about and seeing the world" (Julien and Arnould, 2008, pp.86-87). Understanding that at an elementary level brand is communicative and founded on the exchange of signs and symbols is the first step to understanding how it serves as a symbolic instrument.

³⁴ Semiotics is an academic branch devoted to the study of signs and symbols.

³⁵ There are numerous types of signs, the most significant being "the iconic (based on similarity), indexical (based on contiguity) and symbolic (based on convention)" (Oswald, 2012, p.10)

Still, to understand a brand as a symbolic entity is to also understand that it has meaning. According to Batey, ‘brand meaning’ refers to “the semantic and symbolic features of a brand, the sum of the fundamental conscious and unconscious elements that compose the consumer’s mental representation of the brand. Brand meaning both defines and is defined by the territory where the meaning derived from brand associations corresponds with consumer needs and aspirations. It is where the concrete qualities of the product meet the abstract qualities of the brand”. (Batey, 2008. p.111)

As this definition highlights, brand meaning exists on both a conscious and subconscious level, and individuals are not always cognisant of the full range of meaning that they have associated with a particular product or service. These meanings are derived from brand associations (see figure 7 below), which are the connections that are an individual has attached to the brand in their mind.



Figure 7: Types of Brand Associations (Batey, 2008, p. 122)

These associations can be based on quality, value, personal experiences, organisational intangibles, brand personality, brand-specific design, as well as many other experiential and emotional attributes of the product (Aaker and McLoughlin, 2010).

Brand associations and brand meaning help shape the brand's personality and identity in the minds of its consumers. Moreover, these associations are influential in the positioning of a brand amongst its competitors and a crucial decision-making factor for consumers. Thus the strength of a brand really relies on its associations and the meanings it can generate. This is what semiotician Danesi refers to as the connotative index of brand, where "the higher the number of connotations a brand generates, the greater its psychological force" (Danesi, 2006, p.37). The ability of a brand to produce these associations and connotations is further proof of its symbolic functions.

It should also be noted that brand meaning is drawn from a variety of sources. In his text *Brand Meaning* (2008), author Mark Batey identifies the sources of brand meaning as: brand experience, brand heritage, brand names, brand logos and symbols, and product/category significance (Batey, 2008). Others have included additional sources such as product design, packaging, brand characters and co-branding initiatives (Schmitt in Schmitt and Rogers, 2008). Of these, the one that is of crucial importance within the creative economy is brand experience. Brand experience can be conceptualized "as subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognitions) and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments" (Brakus et al., 2009, p. 53). It has been suggested that there are four dimensions of the brand experience: "a sensory dimension, which refers to the visual, auditory, tactile, gustative, and olfactory stimulations provided by a brand; an affective dimension, which includes feelings generated by the brand and its emotional bond with the consumer; an intellectual dimension, which refers to the ability of the brand to engage

consumers' convergent and divergent thinking; and a behavioural dimension, which includes bodily experiences, lifestyles, and interactions with the brand" (Zarantello and Schmitt 2010, p. 533). The strength and resonance of the brand experience then depends on how many of these dimensions are activated during the experience.

Brand experience has gained a lot of prominence in the marketing field, where it has been translated into what is known as experiential or event marketing (Schmitt and Rogers, 2008). Experiential marketing explores the way in which experiences "pulls consumers to the brand message by providing a stage on which they can satisfy their experiential needs while simultaneously engaging with the brand's hyperreality on an emotional level" (Whelan and Wohlfeil, 2006 p. 315). In commercial branding, marketers have been turning to event marketing so that consumers are able to engage with brand on a personal and more tactile level. In a similar way, emotional branding research has also looked at the way in which brands are able to engage consumers on an emotional level through what Gobé calls the four pillars of emotional branding: building relationships, offering sensorial experience, using imagination and having a cohesive brand vision (Gobé, 2001). Evidently, the value of the lived experience is incalculable and this notion is particularly relevant in light of this thesis' focus on festivals, where brand relies almost entirely upon the consumer's experience.

Ultimately, as the discussions above have illustrated brand communication, brand meaning and brand experience are critical components for the symbolic performance of brands. The discussions around these concepts illustrate that brand is a symbolic instrument whose value extends far past economic considerations. It is for this reason that this thesis again posits that limiting brand to an economic paradigm represents a gross underestimation of its role and value in society as it offers so much more, particularly within the context of the Caribbean creative economy.

3.3.2 Brand as a medium for reconstructing cultural identity

The symbolic nature of brand is also evident in the intersection between identity and cultural consumption, both of which are particularly useful frameworks for analysis, as they offer insight into the motivations which guide consumer interactions with brands. While cultural consumption is often considered to be an inherently individual experience, it is in fact a social experience as “by means of consumption, a social universe is created in which products and brands serve as a communication process” (Hammerl et al, 2016, p.33). Adopting a social constructivist perspective, one can assume that society is socially constructed, and in the same way, brands too are socially constructed, with brand meaning being collaboratively established. There have been various theories surrounding how consumption and social interaction are linked, including Veblen’s theory of conspicuous consumption (Veblen, 1899, 2001), Blumer’s theory of symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969), as well as various think pieces on how consumption has shaped society (Trigg, 2001, Schroeder, 2013; Walker, 2009; Moor, 2007). However, across these differing perspectives the basic tenet remains that consumption is indelibly linked to one’s identity.

It has been argued that for the postmodern individual, a sense of self and identity is created in part through consumption since consumption is a critical means of participating in a social world (Rosenbaum-Elliott et al., 2011). The symbolic meanings embedded in brands shape identity through two channels: self-symbolism and social symbolism. Self-symbolism refers to what the brand communicates to the consumer about themselves – how it helps individuals construct their own identities. Conversely, social symbolism refers to what brand consumption communicates to others about the user. As brand strategist Holt explains, the common denominator is that brands play a crucial role in the construction of identity “acting as a vessel of self-expression, the brands are imbued with stories that consumers find valuable in constructing their identities. Consumers flock to brands that embody the ideals they

admire, brands that help them express who they want to be” (Holt, 2004, p.3). Subsequently, one can say that brands play a crucial role in the symbolic construction of personal identities.

Still, the relationship between brand and identity goes further, as consumption also plays a role in establishing one’s identity within the context of larger communities, in this case one’s cultural identity. Cultural identity can be defined as “the sense of self derived from formal or informal membership in groups that impart knowledge, beliefs, values, attitudes, traditions, and ways of life” (Jameson, 2007, p. 200). An individual’s cultural identity is a very complex structure, usually a composite of a diverse range of what they consider to be their defining characteristics [see figure 8 below] (Jameson 2007; Sussman, 2000; Hall and du Gay, 1996).

Vocation
Occupational field
Profession or job category
Employing organization
Subunit of organization
Class
Economic class
Social class
Educational class
Geography
Nationality
Region, state, province, or city identification
Density identification (urban, suburban, small town, rural)
Residence (if different from nationality)
Philosophy
Religious identity
Political identity
Identity based on other philosophies
Language
First language
Dialect
Other languages
Biological traits with cultural aspects
Race
Ethnicity
Gender
Sexual orientation
Health
Age

Figure 8: Components of Cultural Identity (Jameson, 2007. p. 211)

Cultural consumption is a means of reinforcing one’s identity through one’s choices and thus it can be argued that cultural identity must play a role in brand consumption. In fact, many of

the studies on cultural consumption indicate that people are drawn to products that convey symbolic meanings that are closely intertwined with their cultural identity (He and Wang, 2015). This may be because engaging with local cultural products and brands, affords an individual the opportunity to better understand, celebrate and preserve their culture. This shared appreciation for the culture, also gives an individual a sense of belonging within the wider community. As these cultural products and brands circulate, they reinforce cultural identity, not just within the community but also on a global scale, and for this reason people often feel a deep sense of connection to cultural brands. In fact, as some studies on consumer ethnocentrism³⁶ have shown, this connection with home-grown cultural products can even be manifested as an aversion to foreign products and brands (Tsai et al., 2013; Kipnis et al., 2012), with which there is often no meaningful symbolic connection.

Ultimately, Caribbean cultural brands provide an avenue for helping Caribbean people reconceptualise both their personal identity, as well as their Caribbean identity. As the history of brand shows, particularly in the age of industrialisation, brands were once perceived to be closely intertwined with national identity (Moor, 2007). This thesis argues that in contemporary times, brands, and particularly cultural brands, continue to contribute to an individual's sense of personal and national identity. Recognising the way in which brand intersects with cultural identity shows the far reaching impact that brand has within a society. This impact needs to be acknowledged, particularly within the creative economy where as Chapter Two has illustrated, brand is still almost predominantly viewed within an economic framework. As Caribbean nations continue along the path of forging their cultural identities, it is critical that the region recognises the role that brand plays in shaping those identities.

³⁶ Consumer ethnocentrism was first discussed by Shimp and Sharma (1987) and refers to the beliefs that consumers hold with respect to the appropriateness and morality of consuming good produced abroad.

3.3.3 *Brand as strategy*

Apart from its symbolic and cultural roles, this thesis asserts that brand also serves a strategic tool within the creative economy. In what can perhaps be described as its most traditional role, brand has always been intended as an instrument for motivating consumer decisions, product differentiation and structuring the market. To fully understand its strategic role, one must first understand the influence that brand has throughout the stages of cultural production, exchange and consumption. In the text *Global Culture Industry* (2008), cultural analysts Scott Lash and Celia Lury explain this well through a comparison between brands and commodities: “The commodity is produced. The brand is a source of production. The commodity is a single, discrete, fixed product. The brand instantiates itself in a range of products, is generated across a range of products. The commodity has no relationships. The brand is constituted in and as relations. The commodity has no memory at all; the brand has memory” (Lash and Lury, 2007, p.6). It is important to recognise the distinctions between a brand and a commodity, because the word ‘brand’ is often loosely thrown around, when the cultural product being referred to does not have the requisite qualities that allow it to function as a brand.

One of brand’s primary functions is to serve as an instrument of differentiation for goods and commodities. At the risk of being reductionist, commodities operate on a plane of similarity, whereas brands are the antithesis and exist on the basis on differentiation. In fact, one could say that a brand only exists insofar as it is distinctly different from its competitors. As Lash and Lury point out, “In global culture industry, production and consumption are processes of the construction of difference” (2007, p.5). This is true of brand in all industries, but it is particularly more poignant within the context of the creative economy because the brands being consumed are the product of deep symbolic exchanges. When brand is tied to identity,

values, experience and culture, it takes on a very specific meaning for the consumer, and that is what sets it apart. That is what makes the ‘difference’.

Brand also functions as a means of calibration for the global creative economy. Given that the creative economy is built around symbolic goods whose value cannot be accurately reflected in monetary terms, other mechanisms must be in place to help regulate exchange, one of which is brand. As Lury explains, brand “is an alternative device for the calibration of the market, of matching supply and demand”, and it “mediates the supply and demand of products through the organisation, co-ordination and integration of the use of information.” (Lury, 2004, pp. 4-5). Brand relies on the history, myths and prior experiences tied to the brand, and this is what influences the negotiations and informs the choices that consumers make. Brand’s role as a tool of differentiation and calibration is especially important in light of today’s crowded market, where continuously evolving technology has resulted in an infinite quantity of commodities at the consumer’s disposal. However, while brand’s has an irrefutably influential role in economic spheres, it is important that this role does not overshadow its further far-reaching impacts across the creative economy.

In summary, the above sections show that creative industry brands are not simply generic goods but rather ‘symbolic goods’, meaning that they not only fulfil functional purposes, but transcend this and play a crucial role in the sociocultural lives of consumers. Brand has been explored above in a variety of roles, as a symbolic instrument, as a medium for reconstructing cultural identity and as a strategic tool that influences the flows of production, circulation and consumption across the creative economy. In understanding the various ways in which brand works, this research can now explore how brand can serve to increase the symbolic value of the Caribbean’s creative industry’s products on both a national and international scale. However, first, the larger brand that is the Caribbean, must also be explored as it plays a crucial role in the regional creative economy.

3.4 Nation brands

3.4.1 *Understanding the nation brand*

As this thesis intends to explore Brand Caribbean, it is important to first understand how a nation's³⁷ values can be translated into a nation brand. To do this, one must start with an understanding of nationalism, which to date remains notoriously difficult to define (Anderson, 2006; Seton-Watson, 1977, Gellner, 2008). According to celebrated academic Anthony Smith, over the years the term nationalism has been used to mean (and I quote):

- I. A process of formation, or growth of nations;
- II. A sentiment or consciousness of belonging to the nation
- III. A language and symbolism of the nation
- IV. A social and political movement on behalf of the nation
- V. A doctrine and/or ideology of the nation, both general and particular

(Smith, 2001 pp.5-6)

Given the divergence that is evident across these definitions it is no surprise that nationalism remains an embattled ground for academic research. It was amidst these contentious discussions and negotiations that the term 'Nation brand' rose to popularity in the mid-1990s. It was driven largely by the work of political analyst Simon Anholt, who explained that "places have always been brands, in the truest sense of the word" and that branding a place was simply a process of "defining the most realistic, most competitive and most compelling strategic vision", then communicating and fulfilling it (Anholt, 2003, pp. 213-214).

³⁷ A nation can be defined as "a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members" (Smith, 1991 p. 14).

Thus, from its inception, the nation brand has been positioned as a tool which can contribute to the economic advancement of a nation. As Kotler and Gertner (2002) explain, “The challenge of national economic development has gone beyond the limits of public policy. The new economic order has transformed economic development into a market challenge as well. Nations compete with other nations and strive to devise sources of competitive advantage...The need to attract tourists, factories, companies and talented people and to find markets for their exports requires that countries adopt strategic marketing management tools and conscious branding.” (Kotler and Gertner, 2002, p.253). Subsequently, the nation brand has come to represent a new pathway towards economic development and sustainability and its popularity has been fuelled by the fact that “there has been a general agreement among academics and practitioners that places can be branded in the same way as consumer goods and services” (Caldwell and Freire, 2004, p. 50-51).

However, since coining the term back in 1996, in recent years its creator, Simon Anholt, has sought to redefine the scope and nature of the nation brand, moving away from a purely economic perspective and re-envisioning it as a means of managing “national and regional identity and the politics and economics of competitiveness” (Anholt 2009, p. 206). He now emphasises that given the multiplicity of elements and factors that contribute to a nations’ brand image, it is impossible to brand a nation. In fact, he posits that it is naïve and even foolish to assume that any entity can significantly affect the brand through the use and application of PR and marketing principles (Anholt, 2010). Anholt also suggests that instead of focusing on nation branding, governments should instead invest their resources “to help the world understand the real, complex, rich, diverse nature of their people and landscapes, their history and heritage, their products and their resources: to prevent them from becoming mere brands” (Anholt, 2010, p.3).

Still, the term nation brand, remains a critical part of global political discourse (even as its creator debates its usefulness) and the theories surrounding it continue to evolve. Nation branding has since been redefined as “the result of the interpenetration of commercial and public sector interests to communicate national priorities among domestic and international populations for a variety of interrelated purposes” (Aronczyk, 2013 p.16). Others have also theorised that it represents a “shift in political paradigms, a move from the modern world of geopolitics and power to the postmodern world of images and influence” (Van Hamm, 2001, p.4). In this way, nation branding is a response to the changing global structures, and thus it shares some similarities with commercial branding. In fact research done by Aronczyk found that “both national elites and business elites express their objectives in terms of ongoing attempts to mobilise diverse peoples with diverse backgrounds into collective units in order to foster material and symbolic loyalties. More strikingly still, they use similar tropes, frames and assumption to do so” (Aronczyk, 2013 p. 9).

Still despite their similarities, nation branding remains a much more complicated task than commercial branding. Anholt details this complexity through his hexagon of ‘competitive identity’ (see Figure 9 below). The term ‘competitive identity’ was later introduced by Anholt because he believed it more accurately reflected the goals of nation branding while acknowledging the integral component of national identity. He also felt that the term ‘nation branding’ conjured images of marketing tricks and distracted from the concepts and constructs he was trying to explain. His model outlines the various channels through which nation brand develops, depicting six core components that shape the nation brand namely: tourism promotion; exports of products and services; government policy; investment; cultural exchange and the people of the country.

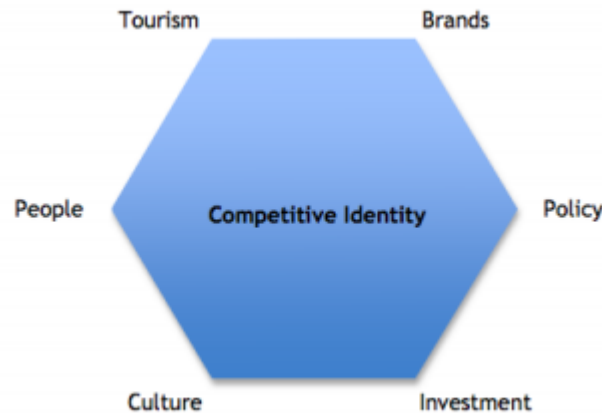


Figure 9: The Hexagon of Competitive Identity. Source: Anholt, 2007, p. 26

However, as Anholt himself notes, the efficient management of the aforementioned channels cannot independently change a nation's image. He explains that competitive identity is ultimately shaped by “the things that are done in the country, and the way they're done; the things that are made in the country, and the way they're made; the way people talk about the country; and the way the country talks about itself” (Anholt, 2007 p. 30), and thus for change to be effected, governments, private businesses and citizens must also throw their support behind the new competitive identity. Thus the creative economy, like any other sector then also has a part to play in nation branding initiatives.

Across the creative economy, the nation brand plays several key roles. Firstly, it offers a framework within which to deconstruct and understand national identity. Consider that across the Caribbean, the national brand is independently managed by each sector, meaning that nations have their tourism brand, their trade brand, their fashion brand etc. However, the nation brand becomes a way to unify these various facets of brands, making a way for macro-level collaborations across public and private sector entities. Through the nation brand, governments can explore and ideally agree on a national strategy and narrative – “the ‘story’ of who the nation is, where it is going and how it is going to get there – which honestly reflects

the skills, the genius and the will of the people” (Anholt, 2010, p.7). Adopting this unified approach makes it easier to monitor the international image that a nation portrays.

Secondly, the nation brand also represents a powerful tool for nationals, because as Anholt states, “the nation brand goes before them like a calling card, opening doors, creating trust, generating respect and raising the expectation of quality, competence and integrity” (Anholt, 2009, p. 207). In a world, where products move across boundaries almost seamlessly, the birthplace of products, particularly cultural products whose origins are intrinsically manifested, is an important characteristic. This is the basis for what is known as the ‘country of origin effect’ where the country’s reputation and national values are believed to ‘rub off’ on their products (Anholt, 2007). In this way, the nation brand then becomes a defining element of the cultural offering, since regardless of intentionality, the ideas, opinions and stereotypes that define a nation are inherently wrapped up in their cultural products and services. It is for this reason that it is important to explore the nation brand’s role in the creative economy within this thesis.

3.4.2 Discussing Brand Caribbean and regional identity

As previously mentioned, the Caribbean context not only calls for research into the nation brand, but also into how national identity can be extended to incorporate a regional identity. Over the years many of the region’s greatest intellectual minds including Rex Nettleford, Eric Williams, C.L.R James, Marcus Garvey, George Lamming, Derek Walcott, and Stuart Hall have all written on the struggle to define identity across the region. Looking at their varied deconstructions it becomes clear that defining both national and regional identity has been a long and difficult process. On a national level, colonial frameworks and ideologies, as well as persistent debates around ethnicity and race, still hamper the process of defining national identity. These same challenges are magnified on a regional level, where many still struggle

with the idea of a regional identity due to strong nationalist principles, ethnocentric beliefs and a fierce competitive spirit. As Rex Nettleford, a revered regional scholar explained, “The Caribbean identity is concerned more with the intertextuality that cultural diversity dictates, in contrast to the principle of homogeneity that has informed the ‘identity’ of established powerful enclaves” (Nettleford, 2003 p. xix). Crafting a regional identity mandates that the unique cultural idiosyncrasies of each nation must be acknowledged and fairly represented. This identity must also be fashioned from within a complex network where there are a multitude of the players including independent governments, public sector stakeholders, private sector investors and of course the citizenry.

It is for these reasons that for decades the region has been somewhat unsuccessfully chasing regional integration.³⁸ Whilst strides have been made in many sectors, the creative economy has been indispensable in the fight to foster a regional spirit. As one writer explains when discussing the case of Trinidad and Tobago – “The project of nationhood and an abiding peoplehood has been difficult for Trinidad and Tobago. But the supreme artists, products and directors of this difficult project – writers, poets, calypsonians, carnival mas-makers (Carnival costume designers) – represent the advancement of that Jamesian ideal, that harmonious community of individual and state” (Harney, 1996, p.3).

It is not surprising that the purveyors of culture are ultimately the drivers of national identity, and by extension regional identity, as culture remains the root of identity, and as aforementioned, the creative industries can foster a greater understanding of identity. Still the concept of a Caribbean identity remains murky and has proven difficult to pin down. As Nicholas Laughlin, editor of *Caribbean Beat*³⁹ muses, “The word does mean something,

³⁸ The region has developed numerous social, political and legislative initiatives to foster regional integration. These include the formation of CARICOM, CARIFORUM, The University of the West Indies, The Caribbean court of justice etc.

³⁹ Caribbean Beat is the official flight magazine for Caribbean Airlines and is the region’s most widely distributed arts and culture magazine.

because we are its meaning. *Sumus ergo sumus*. We know 'Caribbean' means something, because we know we are 'Caribbean'. And, word by word, sentence by sentence, gesture by gesture, chord by chord, beat by beat, we are trying to figure it out. We are trying to understand ourselves" (Laughlin, 2006).

There is undoubtedly a certain 'Caribbeanness', an increasingly common neologism, that is reflected in the region's images, symbols, language, landscape, and livelihood, that when captured and infused in cultural products ultimately imbues them with their distinctiveness (Mohammed 2009; Bolland, 2004). It has been formed and fashioned out of a colourful history shaped by colonisation, slavery, creolisation and the many implications that all these socio-political happenings imply (Shepherd and Richards, 2002). However it has evolved and continues to do so, and as and for that reason it important to bypass the desire to isolate a specific set of 'Caribbean traits' or to try to extrapolate the qualities that define 'caribbeanness'. Instead, it is much more useful to acknowledge the fluidity of the Caribbean identity and recognise that "West Indian culture at any moment is the sum of patterns, behaviours, ideas, and customs characteristic of West Indian societies" (Smith, 2004 p. 366).

Still, while 'Caribbeanness' remains somewhat undefined, what is known is that it is the sum of the myths⁴⁰ and narratives that been shared about the region over time. As such, nation branding can be described as a myth-building process. As Aronczyk clarifies "We can view the creation and promotion of a new image of a nation as its own form of creative destruction in which old myths and memories are swept away and new ones instituted in their place" (Aronczyk, 2007, p.119). Amidst this process of simultaneous deconstruction and reconstruction, Caribbeanness is being built by both the people who live it and those observe it. As Holt explains "a brand emerges as various authors tell stories that involve the brand.

⁴⁰ Myths "bring together in a single potent vision elements of historical fact and legendary elaboration to create an overriding commitment and bond for the community" (Smith, 1999 p. 57).

Four primary types of authors are involved: companies, the culture industries, intermediaries (such as critics and retail salespeople), and customers (particularly when they form communities) (Holt, 2004, p.3). Whilst his model was created with a more commercial product in mind, it does raise the question of who tells the stories about Brand Caribbean? Within the context of the creative industries, the authors would be all those listed above, but they would also include governmental bodies, tourism authorities, media (both local and international), nationals and the diaspora, as they all help contribute to the myths that propel cultural brands. As the power of a brand lies in the strength of the narratives and stories that support it, it is important to acknowledge and understand the multiplicity of storytellers who build the brand. However, it is of course impossible to wholly control the discourse around a brand, and thus often times the myths built around the Caribbean may not be an accurate reflection of the Caribbean story.

Towards an authentic brand

Thus the discussion around Caribbeanness must also be linked to discourse around authenticity. If Caribbeanness remains hard to define – how then can one determine the authenticity of cultural products? Authenticity has been approached from a variety of academic fields, with many positioning it as a sort of binary – where goods are either authentic or forgeries. This perspective would not work for the cultural industries, as cultural production usually exists on a spectrum where products fall between “a synthetic or re-created version of the true culture or heritage” or a representation of “real indigenous culture or heritage that is unmediated and reflects an objective reality of a destination” (Wong, 2015. p.675).

As such, determining authenticity remains difficult. It has been argued that there are three modes through which authenticity can be determined: the canonical mode where authorities

deem a product authentic; the explanatory mode where authenticity is decided on the basis of investigating evidence and the performative mode where authenticity lies in the credibility of the content (Lacoste et al, 2014). However some writers oppose this approach, claiming that determining the authenticity of a product is a personal decision, because authenticity ultimately lies in the eye of the beholder and thus it remains “subjective and perceptual, meaning the consumer determines what seems authentic in their eyes” (Beverland, 2014, p.112).

The discussion around authenticity has become a point of contention for many in the creative sectors, particularly in light of the fact that many regional cultural products are now being produced or reproduced outside of the region. It raises many unanswered questions, the first being who has the right to determine if something is authentically Caribbean. Given its subjectivity, authenticity then depends on the consciousness and awareness of the consumer. Therefore, while in the opinion of local creative industry stakeholders, many of the ‘Caribbean’ products currently on the market are inauthentic, the consumers they are sold too may well consider them to be genuine representations of Caribbean culture. Alternatively, one could leave the decisions on authenticity to experts, but who qualifies as an expert on Caribbeanness? Furthermore what metrics would they use to assess authenticity? Do the creator and materials have to be from Caribbean? Does production have to take place locally?

Added to this, there is the looming question of whether anything that is produced for commercial purposes can be ever be truly considered authentic. It is possible that in the midst of commercialising culture, we in fact present a staged version of culture (MacCannell, 1973). This version of culture may be diluted for the foreign palate or it may be a heavily theatricised display built upon cultural stereotypes. Of course, these debates around authenticity are not only limited to the creative industry, as they feature in other sectors such as media, performance and tourism (Antony, 2014; Taylor J., 2001; Chhabra et al., 2003.) However, as

the creative industries are steeped in culture, the presence or absence of Caribbeanness is much more evident and a cause for serious concern, and it is for this reason that it is addressed in Chapter Seven of this thesis.

Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter looks at the theoretical constructs upon which this thesis is founded. It begins by redefining the creative economy as a symbolic economy, focusing on the distinct qualities that set it apart from traditional sectors including the fact that the economy trades in symbolic goods. The chapter then moves on to explore brand, first presenting it in its traditional form as an economic paradigm, then moving on to illustrate how it can be reconceptualised as a framework for cultural analysis with regards to the commodification, production and consumption that occurs across the creative economy. In doing so it explores the various roles that brand plays across the creative economy as a symbolic instrument, a medium for reconstructing cultural identity and a strategic tool.

Following this, the chapter explores the concept of the nation brand, illustrating that is much more than a tool for economic development and highlighting the fact that it affects every interaction that a country has with other nations and in so doing significantly shapes the sociocultural, political and economic development of that nation. The chapter specifically focuses on the effect that nation branding has on identity, ultimately illustrating that engaging in the process of nation branding has become a way to help Caribbean people reconceptualise Caribbean identity. This discussion on identity also touches on the notion of Caribbeanness, showing that while it remains hard to define and even authenticate, this intangible element brimming from the region's creative products is what endows them with their symbolic value and thus it represents a potent and invaluable component in driving the regional brand.

This chapter was crafted so that the reader would be able to acknowledge the duality of the creative economy, as both an economic system and a symbolic economy. In shifting focus away from traditional economic indicators, the thesis creates a space for cultural analysis which can focus on alternative elements that have been previously overlooked, such as brand, creativity, value and identity. Furthermore, in illustrating the fact that both brand and the nation brand are far more than economic paradigms or tools, this chapter allow the reader to expand the scope of both concepts, a task that is critical for contextualising the data and analyses that this thesis offers. Having now presented the reader with a theoretical overview of the core concepts being explored, the thesis' following chapters can proceed to explore the critical roles that these multifaceted elements play across the regional creative economy.

Chapter Four: Research Methodology

This research was designed with the aim of developing an understanding of the ways in which brand affects the dynamics of the Caribbean's creative economy and this chapter explains how this aim was met using qualitative interviews with industry stakeholders as the primary method of inquiry. The chapter begins by exploring qualitative research, offering a brief overview of several qualitative methods and then demonstrating the particular suitability of qualitative interviewing for this thesis. A significant portion of the chapter is then devoted to rigorously justifying the applicability of qualitative interviewing by exploring both its methodological strengths and limitations. The chapter also explores the challenges and limitations associated with working within the Caribbean context, ensuring that the reader has a holistic view of the research landscape.

The chapter then proceeds to explore the data collection process, a process that was recorded and written immediately after the researcher returned from the field so that the experience would be fresh in her memory. This chapter describes the scope of the study, the sampling design, interview participants and the practicalities associated with conducting the interviews. It also details the unexpected challenges that were encountered during the field work, since these unforeseen developments ultimately shaped not only the research experience but the research data as well. The chapter then explores the data analysis process covering transcription, the coding and crafting of themes and the incorporation of secondary data. Following this, it looks at the ethical considerations that arose and closes with a reflection on the role of the researcher. This chapter is ultimately intended to provide a systematic evaluation of the research process and its methods, alongside descriptions of aspects of the experience itself, and as it records the researcher's unique experience, it is written from a first person perspective.

4.1 Qualitative Research

Given the absence of a large repository of regional research, this thesis had to adopt an exploratory approach, which is where research seeks to investigate new phenomena, identify critical categories of meaning and lay groundwork for additional research (Marshall and Rossman, 2011). As previously stated, this thesis aims to produce knowledge that leads to a deeper understanding of the impact that brand has on the dynamics of the Caribbean creative economy (particularly within the framework of cultural production), and consequently how brand itself becomes a framework for critical cultural research. In light of these aims, qualitative research was deemed the most appropriate approach.

Admittedly, ‘Qualitative research’ is a complex term to unpack as it covers quite a diverse range of paradigmatic, philosophical and methodological approaches and perspectives. However, while acknowledging the risk of oversimplification, qualitative research can be loosely described as research that seeks to understand the world and phenomena from the perspective of those experiencing it. Steeped in the belief that reality is socially constructed, qualitative enquiry is thus a means to explore how people construct and embed meaning in their worlds. From an epistemological standpoint, qualitative researchers, are interested in interpretation of the human experience and they believe that “the best way to learn about people’s meanings and meaning-making is to listen to people talk about their experiences in their own way and in their words” (Magnusson and Marecek, 2015, p.2). In line with this, Ragin and Amaroso (2011) identify some of the key goals of qualitative inquiry as giving voice, interpreting culturally or historically significant phenomena and advancing theory.

While it is difficult to limit the goals of qualitative research to a definitive list, it is easier to identify the common traits that most researchers who use this methodology share. One of these fundamental traits is an aim to understand the world through the eyes of the participant,

since it produces the most authentic account. This was particularly important in a study like this where I was interested in exploring the way brand is understood, framed and reproduced by cultural producers. Given the diversity amongst cultural producers (which range from private artisans to public sector organisations), where for each group and even within each group brand meant something different for each individual, a comprehensive analysis of the role of brand meant understanding the value of the unique perspective.

Qualitative researchers also practise what Bryman (2012) calls a preoccupation with the description and prominence of context. Since Geertz's (1973) call for 'thick descriptions', qualitative researchers have been focused on describing and understanding how context shapes the phenomena they study. Likewise, in this study, the Caribbean and the unique characteristics of this space are continuously reflected upon while analysing the data. As will be discussed later in section 4.2.2, the Caribbean context creates a unique framework to which I had to adapt. The ability to adapt is also a trait qualitative researchers share since they are also known for operating within a framework that values flexibility, refusing to be trapped by 'methodolatry'.⁴¹As such, during this thesis, I tried to remain open to changes, allowing the research to develop naturally and not allowing predetermined ideas to limit the research's potential.

Given that qualitative research is effectively governed by its own rules, it also has to be assessed by its' own rules. Quality assessment for qualitative research has continued to be a contentious issue, especially when the assessment is based on traditional evaluation criteria such as reliability, validity and generalizability. While some qualitative researchers still do use these terms, many, like myself, choose to assess their work through more relatable criteria, such as those put those forward by Guba and Lincoln (1994), which refer instead to

⁴¹ Methodolatry refers to "a preoccupation with selecting and defending methods to the exclusion of the actual substance of the story being told" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003, p.48).

trustworthiness and authenticity. In this system, trustworthiness refers to the credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of the study (Bryman, 2012). Credible research is that which is a true representation of the reality and some of the strategies for ensuring credibility include using well-established methods, familiarising yourself with the culture prior to investigation, and continuous reflection on the role of the researcher (Shenton, 2004), all of which were done during this thesis. The confirmability of the thesis is also defensible, because, as explained in the data analysis section of this thesis (section 4.5), I have taken great care to ensure that the thesis reflects the data gathered and is not a product of pre-determined ideas or concepts. The transferability and dependability of this thesis lies in how well other researchers can use these techniques either in similar studies, or within the same context to extract similar results and thus care has been taken to ensure the research process is clearly detailed to facilitate replicability.

Similarly, efforts were also taken to guarantee the authenticity of the research. Authenticity refers to how fair, catalytic and educative research proves to be (Bryman, 2012). As the thesis will show, fairness was maintained as the work represents the multiplicity of values, ideas and relationships that were present in the data. Similarly, the ontological authenticity of the thesis is clear since it does achieve its goal of developing new knowledge and expanding the understanding of the Caribbean's creative economy. Finally, the catalytic authenticity of the research, which refers to the ways in which this research can spur action, is validated by the numerous actionable recommendations provided in the thesis' conclusion chapter.

The Methods

While there are numerous qualitative methods at the researcher's disposal, the most popular of these are interviews, focus groups, case studies, observation and textual analysis. I was tasked with selecting the methods that would best suit my research aims and the interview method was ultimately selected for reasons that will be discussed further in the Section 4.2. However, before deciding to conduct interviews I did briefly consider several other methods, the first being focus groups.

Focus groups, often considered group interviews, are a method where conversation is used as a knowledge-building process, facilitated by the exchange of ideas between participants. Compared to interviews they also offer the added advantage of a greater variety of perspectives, bolstered by the fact that group dynamics also create a space for debate. However, it became clear that a focus group did not offer any particular advantage over interviews since I was not interested in getting the participants to hash out ideas or problematize as a collective. I was instead interested in their unique perspective, as shaped by their unique positions and experiences within the creative economy. Furthermore, focus groups would have brought the added complication of having to mediate group dynamics, which within the small circle that is Caribbean society, would no doubt be affected by the complex nature of the participants' histories with each other. Additionally, as I later learnt during the data collection phase, the feasibility of corralling prominent cultural producers, all of whom had demanding schedules would have made this method logistically difficult.

I also considered developing a case-study. Case study research provides in-depth analysis of a particular phenomenon by focusing on a particular case(s). Because the research is limited to a specific number of cases, the researcher is able to study them in detail and generate detailed and rich descriptive knowledge. However again the method did not seem particularly suited to

the aims of the research as my intent was not to explore specific or singular brands or organisations. A case study would have meant selecting a singular subject for enquiry, a difficult task in a context so economically, politically and logistically diverse. Moreover, while the region has produced some powerful cultural brands like Bob Marley, these successes are often unique cases and not representative of today's realities.

Similarly, observation, an ethnographic method that relies on the researcher's ability to systematically document the phenomenon under investigation, was also ruled out as a method as there was nothing ostensible that I could observe. Furthermore, I was not interested in the dimensional and thick descriptions of observation data, but rather the lived experiences as told by reflexive voices. Ultimately, it was evident that in order to access knowledge about the frameworks, fields and contexts within which brand and culture were produced, I would have to speak to cultural producers. The following section explains my use of the interview method to achieve these aims.

4.2 Interview Research

The primary goal of a qualitative researcher is "to build partial and contextualized truths in collaboration with their research participants or through reflexive engagement with their research texts" (Leavy, 2014). Qualitative interviews are one means by which this can be accomplished. In its simplest form, an interview can be described as 'a meaning-making partnership between interviewers and their respondents' (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2006. p. 105). This thesis purposefully describes the interview process as qualitative, as this qualifier distinguishes this approach from quantitative interviews, which feature a more rigid structure and standardised questions and responses. However, more importantly the term 'qualitative' signifies the critical role that words and meaning hold in this thesis. It also reinforces the idea that the interview is a symbolic interaction and this implies a richness of data, which is

particularly valuable when conducting research in a complex and heavily contested field such as the creative economy.

For this research to be successful in achieving its aims, I needed insider insight from those involved in cultural production across the region. The insight needed to be deep, descriptive and reflective of the interviewees' real-life experiences in their respective cultural sectors. The research needed to explore the “multiplicity of local meanings’ (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015, p. 62) and that could only be accessed through individual voices. As such, qualitative interview research was the only method that proved applicable since the context, the people and their uniquely self-crafted narratives all play critical roles in this research method.

Additionally, interviews were necessary given the complexity of the topic. Brand and brand meaning are difficult to articulate. This is not only because brand has an intangible element but also simply because most people have never been asked to reflect on and dissect their emotional reactions and cognitive interpretations of brands. The task was understandably a difficult one and the interview process allowed me to be present and offer assistance. As Arksey and Knight write “Interviewing is a powerful way of helping people to make explicit things that have hitherto been implicit – to articulate their tacit perceptions, feelings and understandings” (Arksey and Knight 1999 in Gray 2009, p. 370). Thus, interviewing provided the best option for tackling the novelty and difficulty associated with brand analysis.

Another advantage of conducting interviews is that I had the ability to select a broad range of interview participants, and thus access a diverse set of stories. Brand is a complex topic and understanding the way it works requires understanding that it works differently, for different people, depending on their unique positions within the creative economy. Conducting qualitative interviews created a space where brand could be explored from a multiplicity of perspectives. It also created a space for negotiation within which dialogue is used to facilitate

the co-construction of knowledge (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015). The interviews were semi-structured and used open-ended questions, which gave the interviewees the flexibility offer in-depth qualitative responses which could then be further explored and clarified by the researcher. As meaning inherently requires negotiation, it can be argued that this back and forth allowed for the generation of knowledge and the development and expansion of ideas that gave the data its richness. This richness is particularly important in this thesis where the topic of the research is of a more symbolic nature and features complex concepts such as identity, history, creativity and value that cannot be explored without discussion.

Finally, a key driver behind the section of qualitative interviews was that it would represent an innovative approach within Caribbean context. As highlighted in Chapter Two, most regional creative economy research is presented as empirical reports focused on economic viability. Using qualitative methods meant a decidedly more interpretivist approach where the focus is definitively more symbolic than economic. This deviation from the usual research design offered an opportunity to create an alternative scape of the regional creative sectors and thus can feed into the grander holistic account of the economy that regional researchers are working towards. This shift would also create a space where previously overlooked aspects of the creative economy, such as our narrative, identities and brands could be duly examined.

4.2.1 Methodological limitations

As a researcher, I have a duty to acknowledge any methodological shortcomings my chosen method may have. Interview research has always raised concerns from critics, one popular critique being that the interview process often appears overly simplified. I agree that the beauty of interview research lies in its apparent simplicity, however, as Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) point out, this simplicity is illusionary, driven by the fact that this method resembles everyday conversation. Whilst interviewing can mimic a natural everyday occurrence, in

actuality, normal conversations are dynamic and spontaneous, while an interview is quite the opposite since its content has been pre-designed and the communication act is orchestrated with a pre-determined goal. Recognising this, it is clear that the naturalisation of the interview process sometimes impedes the ability of critics to recognise and value the rigour of this research method.

Another critique of qualitative interviewing is its reliance on subjective experiences. Since the researcher has to focus on individual perspectives, the research sample is usually smaller in scope and purposefully selected, which then affects the generalizability and the replicability of the research. While these are valid concerns, within the parameters of this thesis where issues of culture and identity are at the centre of the debate, the experiences and histories of the participants are invaluable. Ultimately, it is only through an intimate method like interviews that researchers can craft detailed narratives and develop in-depth analyses that accurately reflect the real-life experience of working within the Caribbean's creative economy.

Critics have also argued that with interviews the researcher can only report on the data given and if this data is in any way manipulated or tailored due to the interviewee's personal agendas, the researcher will never know. This is true, and thus interview research is built on the premise of trust and good faith. However the onus remains on researchers to recognise any biases and where possible verify the information provided by participants, and as a responsible researcher I ensured such efforts were taken so as to maintain the integrity and validity of this thesis.

Finally, interview research is also critiqued because it is a very time consuming method. Drawing from my own experience, the early stage of sourcing expert interviewees took a lot longer than expected as there was no pre-existing sampling frame. Following this, establishing relationships, scheduling and finally conducting interviews proved to be challenging given the

demands on both my time and that of these busy experts. Furthermore, after the completion of the interviews, the transcription and data analysis processes proved more time-consuming than previously anticipated. However, despite the many challenges faced, it must be said that the richness of the data that was gathered was well worth the effort.

4.2.2 Contextual limitations

As aforementioned, the context within which qualitative research is conducted has a significant influence on the research process and many of the research challenges I encountered were shaped by the Caribbean's distinct framework. Firstly, acknowledging that the 'Caribbean' is an umbrella term for several distinct nationalities, whilst there is a strong and vibrant Caribbean identity, one must also acknowledge the tensions between national identities and the Caribbean identity. The reality is simply that certain territories have a more influential role, as a result of historical, political and economic resources. For this reason, the research has focused on three of the most influential nations – Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica and Barbados and as a result, the smaller Caribbean nations, commonly known within the region as 'the small islands' were not equally represented in this thesis. This decision was taken because these smaller nations do not have the resources to pump into their creative sectors or to even tabulate creative industry statistics, making it difficult to conclusively report on their contribution to the regional creative economy. However, even after limiting the research to these three nations, negotiating equal representation of these three within the research was difficult, especially considering that I am a national of Trinidad and Tobago, and thus had more resources and access to data from this particular island.

Another challenge encountered during fieldwork was the lack of industry research in the Caribbean. Apart from academia, there has been little interest in investigating the cultural sector, and the region lacks repositories devoted to cultural developments. The Caribbean has

essentially been stuck in a cycle where the lack of data means that it cannot properly evaluate the sector and this lack of evaluation leads to an inability to justify the value of the sector and the need to research it. Consequently, the task of interviewing industry stakeholders was all the more difficult because both they and I did not have access to a lot of regional data from which to formulate opinions and this meant that stakeholder knowledge was often island-specific. Furthermore, many Caribbean governments are still not offering open access to their data and in cases where they do, the access is limited to the physical document since they do not see the value in converting timeworn data into electronic formats. Consequently, while there is not a lot of relevant data, the little that has been generated is often inaccessible.

As difficult as it was to source data, it also proved quite problematic to track down which people and organisation were responsible for certain projects. For example, in trying to determine who was responsible for Jamaica's 'Brand Jamaica' campaign, I was referred to over four different government offices. The lack of clarity over portfolios and responsibilities can again be linked back to the lack of information available online. It is quite telling that even those working within cultural organisations were unsure about the institutions and networks that exist within their national frameworks. This of course made it difficult to determine who would be the best persons to interview for my research.

It also proved problematic that I was interviewing people who held multiple and diverse roles within the creative economy. As the Caribbean creative economy is smaller in size, those in the sector often need to maintain various income streams. As such, when I initially approached individuals about their involvement in one creative sector, I often uncovered that they were also heavily involved in other creative sectors. I also discovered that some who I approached about their private sector roles, also held public sector titles. I was initially concerned about this because I was interested in a particular area of their expertise and I wondered whether I should ask interviewees to respond as if they were wearing one hat.

However, I realised this would serve no purpose as the sectors and roles were so closely intertwined and it would be useless to try to ask participants to compartmentalise their knowledge. Still, despite this and the many other challenges implicit in the Caribbean framework, the research was able to achieve its aims.

4.3 Designing the interview study

The first step of designing the research plan was refining the scope of the study beyond the three sectors and three nations identified in the introduction chapter. It was imperative to narrow the scope to a field that could be sufficiently explored in-depth, as well as ensuring the project was feasible with respect to my time and resources. The first decision I made was to narrow my focus from culture to cultural production. As stated in the introduction chapter, the impetus for this research is to further the development of the Caribbean creative economy, and as such, I thought it would be more beneficial to assess the dynamics controlled by cultural producers, since these would be the areas that could be adapted if need be. Also, by focusing on cultural production I also limited the list of interviewees to cultural producers. This refocus would also clearly delineate this thesis from the field of consumer research, since brand research is often focused on consumer interaction with brands.

Defining the scope also meant determining which sectors of cultural production would be explored. I decided to explore both public and private sector producers as it would allow for diversity in opinions. Exploring both ends of the spectrum also made this research more holistic and allowed for the development of a more accurate representation of the distinct characteristics of the region's creative industries.

4.3.1 Sample design

As aforementioned, “a brand emerges as various authors tell stories that involve the brand” (Holt, 2004, p.3), thus, in order to create a comprehensive analysis of brand and fully understand the diverse ways in which it functions, I needed to interview the ‘authors’ who contributed to the evolution of the region’s cultural brand(s). Consequently, I chose to select interviewees using the purposive sampling method where “the sample units are chosen because they have particular features or characteristics that will enable detailed exploration and understanding of the central themes and puzzles which the researcher wishes to study” (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003, p. 78). There are several subtypes of purposive sampling, however this research uses the expert sampling approach.

Expert sampling is a method where participants are selected based on their level of expertise. In this case, participants were selected based on their knowledge and experience in their chosen creative sector. This method allowed me to seek out highly skilled members of the target population, while keeping the sample size small and more manageable. It also meant that I could channel my energies, time and resources into focused interviews that I knew would yield usable data. Given the fact that the population I was examining was from an informal sector and there was no available sampling frame, this type of nonprobability sampling technique proved to be the best option.

However, expert sampling is not without its challenges. First, this method relies on the judgement of the researcher to determine who can be considered an expert and as such is a subjective sampling technique. In order to increase the fairness of the process I implemented a systematic approach for selecting participants. When selecting public sector officials, I selected one individual from each of the national organisations whose mandate involved cultural production. That individual was chosen based on their work portfolio, as described in

their organisation's online directories. If the individual did not feel they possessed the expertise to answer the interview questions, they were asked to refer someone in their organisation who may be able to do so. This ensured that all relevant public sector stakeholders were included in the sample.

With the selection of private sector interviewees, I had to make a deliberate decision to avoid interviewing only well-known and successful stakeholders. The interviewees' position in what Bourdieu terms the 'field of cultural production', is arguably a critical factor that shapes their experience (Bourdieu, 1993). Being a newer entrant to the sector allows for fresher take on the industry, its barriers to entry and the opportunities for those with less fiscal and social capital. Even those who were veterans, yet had not broken into the 'winner's circle' could offer a different vantage point from which to assess the dynamics of their creative sector.

Linked to this notion of one's position in the field, is the discussion around elite interviewing. As the interviewee database will show, many of this thesis' research participants can be considered experts or elites who represent "crystallization points for practical insider knowledge and are seen as surrogates for a wider circle of players" (Bogner et al., 2009, p.2). The use, value and challenges surrounding elite interviews and 'studying up' in cultural research has been discussed by many scholars (Herzog and Ali, 2015; Aguiar et al., 2012) however, as regards this research I felt it was critically important to include the narratives of elites, since they were the individuals who had spent years in the sector and could draw on the wealth of experiences amassed as they worked their way up through the field. Furthermore, given the nature of the discussions on brand and Brand Caribbean, elites were in a position to have a macro-view of the Caribbean creative economy, and thus comment on the varying challenges that exist on individual, national and regional levels. Being experts or elites also meant that these individuals would have been involved in influential large-scale discussions

and access to these discussions and insight into the decision-making processes that accompany them were necessary considering the aims of this research.

In designing this sample another key consideration was the small scale of the region. Working within a small pool meant limited options for both people and organisations from which I could pull interviewees. Furthermore, as in the case of one Barbadian organisation, if the firm declined to participate, there were few, if any alternatives. Additionally, given the nature of the creative industries, there were also very tight local and regional networks, which meant most of the people being interviewed knew each other intimately. Consequently, the relationships between the participants featured in the research data since they often referenced their friendships or their friend's work. There was even a case where an interviewee confessed she had debated with another potential interviewee about whether to participate in this research. Likewise, somewhat related to the issue of scale was the challenge of representativeness. As explained in the introduction I chose to narrow my focus to three nations: Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. Consequently, when selecting interviewees, particular attention was paid to ensure that interviewees from each island were invited to participate and share about their unique national context. The details of these interviewees are provided in the following section.

4.3.2 Interviewee database

When the research began, there was no predetermined goal number of interviewees. In line with the aims of qualitative research, I intended to interview as many subjects as was necessary until I hit a saturation point, beyond which no new information was likely to be gained by conducting further interviews. Ultimately twenty-five (25) experts and cultural practitioners participated in the interview process. Owing to ethical considerations, the data has been anonymised with the interviewees' names having been replaced by pseudonyms and

with either the name of their organisation or their role within that organisation being replaced by descriptive markers. Table 2 (below) gives a brief overview of the interviewees, however please refer to Appendix F for a lengthier profile that explains the reason for selecting each participant and offers a description of both the role that the interviewee and their organisation played within the creative economy at the time that this research was undertaken.

Table 2: List of Interviewees

Annalise Fashion Designer and Founder Eponymous Fashion Label, Trinidad and Tobago
Anthony Executive Jamaica Intellectual Property Office (JIPO)
Avril Marketing Executive Caribbean Tourism Organisation, International
Candice and Crystal Fashion Designers Trinidad and Tobago
Christopher Artist – Singer, writer, producer, director Trinidad and Tobago
Denise Executive Jamaica Association of Composers, Authors and Publishers (JACAP)
Elizabeth Executive Director Cultural heritage organisation, Jamaica
Ethel Co-founder National Jazz festival, Jamaica
Gerald Founder and Director Jamaican music website
Giselle Marketing Executive St. Lucia Tourist Board – Host of the St. Lucia Jazz and Arts Festival
Halcyon Entertainment Executive Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment, Jamaica
Isla Editor-in Chief, Leading Regional Lifestyle Magazine, Barbados

Jordan Founder and Director National Fashion Show, Trinidad and Tobago
Joseph Executive Jamaica Cultural Development Commission
Justin, Founder Regional entertainment company, Trinidad and Tobago
Kerwin Executive National Carnival Commission of Trinidad and Tobago
Kwame Calypso Artist / Executive Trinbago Unified Calypsonians Organisation, Trinidad
Lyn Editor and Publisher Caribbean fashion magazine, St. Lucia
Neil Marketing professional The National Cultural Foundation Barbados
Nicholas Executive Fashion Association of Trinidad and Tobago
Paul Marketing Executive VP Records, United States
Rita Executive – Culture Division Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism, Trinidad and Tobago
Shirley Executive – Culture Division Tobago House of Assembly, Tobago
Stella Veteran Fashion Designer Eponymous Fashion Label, Trinidad and Tobago
Tamoya Manager Bob Marley Group of Companies, Jamaica

As evidenced above, these interviewees reflect a cross-section of individuals from both public and private sector organisations whose positions were representative of the various roles that exist within the Caribbean creative economy. The sample demonstrates a mixture of public sector workers, policy makers and artisans and thus mirrors the diversity in roles, histories,

levels of experience and level of influence that exists in the field. In this way the thesis is able to present an accurate reflection of the experiences of those involved in the production of culture across the regional creative economy.

4.4 Conducting the interviews

The bulk of the interviews took place between January 2015 and May 2015 when I returned to Trinidad and Tobago. I decide to return to the Caribbean because I preferred to conduct the interviews in person and in cases where I could not, it was much more economical to phone other islands from within the region. In addition to this, my field work period also coincided with the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival which provided a great opportunity to be actively involved with the festival and music industries under investigation. While the interviews began in early January, the first contact I had with interviewees was via an electronic invitation in late 2014. However, in cases where online databases were not well maintained, I had to track down phone numbers to call organisations and request email addresses. Likewise, with private sector participants, I sometimes had to resort to using social networking sites to contact them.

As expected, some persons never responded to my invitations, however the majority were very excited by the project and welcomed the opportunity to participate. All interviews were conducted either face-to-face or via the phone. I quickly discovered my preference for face-to-face interview as they made it easier to build a rapport with the individual, which increased the level of trust they had in me and as allowed them to open up more quickly during the interview. Also, with face-to-face interviews the nonverbal responses of interviewees were great cues and let me know when I should press for extended responses or ask follow-up questions. However, as I had to conduct interviews with persons in Jamaica and Barbados, I had to do phone interviews as well. I had originally intended to use online video platform SKYPE, since it would allow me to make again make use of nonverbal cues, however while

most Caribbean nations have reasonably reliable internet services, frequent glitches and loss of internet connection made this medium unreliable and risky.

Conducting telephone interviewing required a different set of skills. Using the phone changes the dynamic, as interviewees often wanted to forego the pleasantries that usually accompany face-to-face conversations which help to forge a personal connection between participants. Additionally, I found that on the phone it is easier to misinterpret tone of voice since there are no other sensory cues that can add context. Telephone interviews also presented added distractions since I could not control the interviewee's environment and I could not ensure that I was the sole focus of their attention. However, despite its challenges this method still served its purpose by giving me access to respondents across the region whom I could not financially afford to visit.

4.4.1 Crafting the interview guide

The interviews were semi-structured and were administered using an interview guide. I selected the semi-structured format because I needed to prepare the questions beforehand since I only had one opportunity to interview these participants and could not afford to forget to explore critical themes. Also, using semi-structured interviews meant I could allow the conversation to expand based on any new ideas that were introduced, since the structure gave me the freedom to re-arrange the order of questions during the interview and thus maintain a natural flow to the conversation.

The first interview guide was developed months in advance of the interviews and had to be edited repeatedly. Initial edits were made to remove industry jargon such as 'brand value', 'narrative' and 'aesthetic', which would have complicated the interview process since their meanings would have to be explored prior to the interviewee responding and even then they may have proved difficult for interviewees to grasp. The guide also had to be tailored to

ensure that the questions flowed well and were not repetitive. This guide was then used as a template to create separate interview guides for each creative sector, as well as those who worked in government institutions that oversaw multiple creative sectors. I later found that the guide also needed to be edited before each interview to reflect each interviewee's areas of expertise.

The guide was scripted so as to elicit the best possible response from interviewees. At the beginning all interviewees were asked to describe their role in the creative economy. This allowed me to understand where the individual positioned themselves, as opposed to where I positioned them based on my own knowledge. The rest of the guide was scripted thematically, so that it flowed well and progressed naturally. Still, when the interviews began, the process actually brought more issues to light. Firstly, I recognised that some questions were very difficult for the interviewees to understand and answer, so these needed to be reviewed and rephrased. Also, when new ideas were introduced by the interviewees, depending on their relevance I sometimes introduced them into subsequent interviews. In this way the interview guide and the process itself was consistently being evaluated and restructured during the entirety of the data collection phase. I later also decided to give interviewees the option to see the questions in advance, as I found this made a remarkable difference in the quality of responses. Please view Appendix G for a sample of one of the interview guides.

4.4.2 Working with the interviewees

The act of interviewing participants was truly a learning experience and it took a while for me to understand the dynamics involved in the process. Understanding the role of power and how this power shifts was one of the first challenges I had to contend with when interacting with the interviewees. Power asymmetry is inherent in the interview research process, owing to the fact that it is essentially a 'manipulated dialogue' within which the interviewer has a

‘monopoly on interpretation’ (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015, p.37). However, power is a dynamic force, and in the case of this thesis where I was interviewing elites, it was sometimes the case that power shifted hands. In my experience it was sometimes a challenge to steer the conversation as the interviewees were accustomed to being in positions of power and dominating the conversation. This is not an uncommon occurrence when ‘interviewing up’ as negotiating power differentials during interviews has remained a popular topic of academic scholarship (Rice, 2010; Smith 2006; Morris, 2009). In this particular case, the onus remained on myself as researcher to alter the flow of the interview to accommodate the interviewee’s need for control by making the conversation more collaborative so that we could both ask and respond to questions.

There was also an issue of interviewees attempting to hijack the interview by turning the interview into a soap box for their grievances. While it was useful to understand the frustrations that they face within their unique frameworks, they sometimes went off on tangents that were not overtly related to my work. For example, complaints relating to politics and its impact on their work portfolios were repeatedly mentioned. While understanding the limitations that political leanings placed on them was interesting, it was not essential to my thesis. In these cases I discovered the best tactic for refocusing the interview was to lend an empathic ear and use my response to both acknowledge their grievance and create a connection back to my research area. In retrospect, I think that when dealing with authoritative figures with such powerful voices, it was somewhat inevitable that I would lose some control during the interview process. However, it can be argued that any power imbalances are remedied during the analysis of the interviews, since as the researcher I ultimately regain the ability to shape the conversation into a cohesive piece of discourse.

Another concern I faced during the interview process stemmed from the fact that the interviews were recorded using a digital recording device (whose presence the interviewees

had consented to). Recording interviews is standard research practise since it allows for better data collection, circumvents human error and offers the researcher the liberty to review the data in detail at a later date. However, the recording of interviews has been known to have an impact on responses for a variety of reasons. Firstly, given that many of the interviewees were currently employed in public sector organisation, there may have been instances of self-censorship given that they were representing a national organisation and thus had to deliver ‘politically correct’ responses. Secondly, while private sector individuals may have had the opportunity to be more open, they may have also been concerned about their self-image and thus may have painted pictures that reinforce the ideal image that they hope to attain for themselves or their respective organisations or brands. In light of these concerns, I have included the roles that participants serve in throughout the analysis chapter, so that the reader may be mindful of the context and constraints within which participants voice their opinions.

4.5 Exploring the data analysis process

Transcription

After completing the interviews, the following step was transcription,⁴² which involved listening to the recorded interviews and converting the audio into text. In order to convert the data I used Express Scribe Free Transcription Software, a free digital software package that allowed me to slow down the audio playback and improved the expediency and efficiency of the transcription process. However, despite the use of the software, the process turned out to be quite lengthy procedure, as I estimated it usually took me about one hour to transcribe every ten minutes of audio data.

⁴² See Appendix H for a sample transcript.

Still, despite its drain on my time, the transcription process proved beneficial in several ways. Firstly, the change in format from audio to text was crucial and pragmatic since it is far easier to review and analyse text than to work with audio material. The transcriptions also made the raw data more permanent and tangible since as one writer explains “the documentation detached the events from their transience” (Flick, 2009 p.302). Additionally, I also found that doing transcriptions also provided the opportunity for self-reflection. In listening to the interviews I was able to assess which questions worked, which needed rephrasing and how the interview could be better structured to maximise flow. Transcribing also allowed me to critically assess my skills as an interviewer. By listening to myself I was able to better understand the role that I should play as an interviewer, and I was able to translate this knowledge into an improved skillset that will no doubt prove beneficial in future research endeavours.

Furthermore, the value of creating a transcript lies not just in the final script but also in the process, since it can be argued that the transcription is actually the first stage of analysis. My own experience proved this to be true since it was during the transcription that I first began seeing themes emerge. I also began creating raw linkages and playing around with the relationships between the themes even as I transcribed. As such the process offered the opportunity to interact with the data in a cursory way that laid the foundation for the in-depth analysis that would soon follow.

Coding

Following transcription, the next stage of the process involved examining the transcripts and identifying and highlighting any key ideas, concepts and themes that arose. This cursory overview of the transcripts allowed me to familiarise myself with the data while I extracted all the relevant information and in so doing reduced the large amount of text into more useable

packets of information. The ideas and concepts I highlighted were then given a code. Coding refers to the systematic identification and labelling of key themes, idea and concepts that are present in the data. I chose to use an inductive approach, in which codes are created based on their appearance in the text. This approach meant that the data was not subject to predetermined codes that could have proven limiting and may have overshadowed organically occurring findings. Simply put, the data was allowed to speak for itself, without me imposing my ideas.

That being said, some argue that coding can still be considered a biased method, owing to the fact that the researcher makes decisions about what has value and should be coded, usually informed by the pre-determined research questions. Likewise, the researcher also has the power to determine which ideas and concepts should be discarded. As such, a researcher's personal experiences and assumptions have the potential to have a critical impact on the quality of the data (Thomas, 2003). The potential for bias in coding is also a subject of criticism because the coding process is a considerably flexible process. There is in fact no singular definitive approach that defines the process and as such, there can be no real standardization of the process or even the terminology that is used to describe the process with expressions like "codes, themes, categories and labels" being used interchangeably⁴³ (Hammond and Wellington, 2013, p.24). In light of these critiques, I maintain that it is the researcher's responsibility to act ethically (see section 4.6 on ethical considerations), particularly in cases such as these where no coding software or technology was utilised and the agency of the researcher is quite pronounced. As such, during the entire process I ensured that the coding process was completed in a manner that would ensure the accuracy,

⁴³ For the purpose of this thesis I have chosen to use the term 'theme', as I felt it embodied a less formal and clinical tone than its alternatives, and as such lends itself more to the symbolic interpretive approach that this research takes.

authenticity and trustworthiness of the data, so that the thesis would be a factual reflection of the experiences that it claims to represent.

Shaping themes

After coding the ideas and concepts that were present in the text, they needed to be organised into themes. This second round of coding, known as pattern coding is a means of streamlining or summarising the initial codes into a smaller number of more meaningful themes or constructs (Miles et al., 2014). I first began by prioritising the themes that that were reflected in my interview questions, since they were critical for achieving my research objectives. Alongside these, I also developed the themes that emerged organically. These themes were the ones that I had not previously intended to explore, however they featured so prominently in the data that they could not be overlooked. Their prominence was determined not just by the frequency with which they appeared in the data, but also by the value that the interviewees had imbued in them.

After critically selecting the principal themes, they needed to be organised independently. Thomas (2003) recommends that each theme highlighted should potentially feature the following: label for category; description for category; text or data associated with category (quotes); links to other categories; and networks in which category is embedded” (Thomas (2003, p. 4) Borrowing this format, I set about structuring the themes and exploring the complexity of each theme individually. This involved collating the differing opinions of the interviewees and trying to create a cohesive picture around that theme and of course, as phenomena do not exist in isolation, I also had to consider the relationships that existed among all the themes. The task of developing themes also involved heavy textual analysis, since as Chapter Five of this thesis will show, cultural policy and the role that brand played within that framework, grew to be an important theme within this thesis. As such, reviewing

policy documentation produced by the various regional governing bodies became a large part of the analysis process.

Overall, the task of analysing data proved to be a complex process. In fact it is pointless to try to delineate the ‘analysis phase’ of the thesis since analysis is by nature a continuous and sometimes incognisant process that has been ongoing throughout the entirety of the research process. When it came to working with the interview data, while I can separate that process into stages such as transcribing, coding, collating etc., the lines between each blurred easily. Furthermore since the analysis process was shaped by the thesis’ theoretical framework, it meant that as the analysis developed, so too did the theoretical perspectives that informed it. As such, the analysis proved to be a truly pervasive and indefinite process.

4.6 Outlining ethical concerns

In any research project, particularly one involving participants, it is important to consider the ethical implications. With respect to this thesis, prior to the data collection phase, the research plan was approved by the university’s Humanities and Education Research Ethics Subcommittee. The committee considers potential risks for both parties and evaluates the researcher’s proposals regarding how they intend to deal with sensitive matters such as confidentiality and wellbeing. The process is meant to ensure that the research conforms to national and global ethical guidelines and after submitting the proposal, this thesis’s research plan was approved.

Following the approval, in keeping with ethical procedures, from the time interviewees were first approached, a detailed letter explicitly explained the nature of the project and the purpose of interview. These electronic invitation letters ensured that interviewees were aware that the interviews would be recorded and the data published in the final thesis. Interviewees were also

asked to sign consent forms⁴⁴ at either the start or close of the interviews. Moreover, during the interviews, I also tried to adhere to the ethical responsibilities of a researcher, which include showing respect, honouring any promises made to interviewees, limiting the amount of pressure I placed on the participants and of course ensuring that no harm came to any participants (Rubin and Rubin, 2012). In research, ethical considerations also extend to accuracy in transcription, analysis and reporting (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015) and throughout the course of this research, all data was transcribed and reported as accurately as possible. Furthermore, any facts or information provided by interviewees was subsequently verified by the researcher.

Still, despite all of these strategies, one pressing ethical issue remained: confidentiality. The Caribbean is a small space and its small communities lend themselves to a certain transparency, meaning that complete anonymity is not likely. Still, in an effort to protect the identities of the interviewees they have all been given pseudonyms. Furthermore, either their job titles or the names of their affiliated organisations were removed and replaced by descriptive markers in an effort to further protect their identities. This process of anonymization has not affected the quality of the data, as the names of the interviewees and their respective organisations are not as important as their roles or the roles that their affiliated organisations play within the regional creative economy. To this end, these roles are clearly delineated in Appendix F, so that the reader can properly contextualise the interviewees' narratives. It is hoped that with these measures in place the value of the empirical data was not jeopardised and the ethical integrity of the thesis was upheld.

⁴⁴ Please view Appendix I for a sample consent form.

4.7 Reflecting on my role as researcher

Understanding the role of the researcher is critical in all research, but more so in qualitative study where the researcher's subjective interpretations play an important role in shaping the data. As a qualitative researcher I was responsible for thematising the study; hand-picking its participants; co-constructing knowledge with them through dialogue and then interpreting this knowledge. My role therefore became one of mediation, where I was responsible for reliably and ethically translating the data I had accessed, and in this way, it would then be suitable to describe myself as a research instrument (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008).

In considering my role as researcher, I was highly cognisant of the fact that I am a member of the society that I was studying and in fact I considered being a Caribbean national to be a great advantage. In reaching out to potential interviewees, it became clear the Caribbean community likes to help its own and I found that people were eager to participate, simply because I was a Caribbean national and their participation in my research meant an investment in our region's development. Later during the interviews, I recognised that my nationality also facilitated an air of familiarity and there was an expectation on the part of the interviewees that I would understand their experiences since regional social norms or idiosyncrasies were already familiar to me. This acknowledgment that we belonged to the same group was even manifested in the language used during the interviews, where both I and the interviewees used pronouns such as 'we', 'us' and 'our', all of which acknowledged our shared narrative.

Still, moving beyond my Caribbean identity, even my personal identity had an impact on the relationship between the interviewees and myself. As Miller and Glassner (2004) note the way interviewees respond to an interviewer is based on the categories within which they place them. As such, my nationality, age, race, educational background and any other perceptions

interviewees may have had would have shaped not only the way they interacted with me, but their interview responses as well. I even recall instances where my having dreadlocks, a distinct and somewhat emblemised Caribbean hairstyle, became a reference point when discussing identity. I also found that my active participation in the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival that was ongoing at the time seemed to reassure the interviewees that their words were being heard by someone who appreciated and loved their culture as much as they did.

Of course, being so deeply entrenched in the research does raise some concerns with respect to objectivity. Qualitative research has long been under scrutiny for its methodological limitations in relation to objectivity, since it not only focuses on the personal experiences of the participants, but also relies on the unique and subjective interpretations of the researcher. As a Caribbean national and thus a product of Caribbean culture, my experiences, ideas and pre-conceived notions about my home and my culture must be acknowledged. That is to say that I naturally would have had personal biases that would have been ingrained over the years. For example, during my upgrade process I remember an examiner pointing out that I had a bias regarding what we in the Caribbean call 'small islands', because I came from one of the three more powerful nations. Consequently, in order to limit the influence of any biases, be they conscious or unknown, I tried to practise reflexivity. As Bryman writes, "Knowledge from a reflexive position is always a reflection of a researcher's location in time and space" (2012, p. 393). As such, during the data analysis process I tried to remain cognisant of my position and in so doing allow myself to acknowledge and where necessary correct any biases.

Overall, I found that my understanding of the role that I played in my research was continually refined as the research progressed. This realisation brings to mind a metaphor by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) where the researcher is dichotomised as either traveller or miner. As a miner, the researcher views knowledge as buried treasure that needs to be unearthed. However as the traveller, the researcher believes knowledge is constructed. Ultimately, after

completing the research process I recognised that I subscribe to the traveller approach. In this approach “the potentialities of meanings in the original stories are differentiated and unfolded through the traveller’s interpretations of the narrative he or she brings back to home audiences” (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, pp. 48-49). Following my reflection on the process of conducting this research and eventually writing this thesis, it is clear to me that my ultimate task as a researcher became one of interpreting, synthesising and writing a story that could authentically present the data I had gathered. The following analysis chapter begins to explore this story as manifested in regional policy frameworks.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter represents a platform to explain and justify the pivotal decisions made by myself, the researcher during the entirety of the research process. It begins by explaining the decision to use qualitative research and the rationale behind the selection of qualitative interviews as the core research method. In so doing, it also demonstrates that the complexity of brand requires an innovative approach where the richness of the lived experience could be explored through conversation and negotiation. The chapter also discusses the methodological limitations of the interview method, as well as the contextual limitations of the thesis which include a lack of prior industry research, confusing institutional frameworks and a heavy focus on the larger island nations as they are the territories that have collected industry data.

The chapter also details the process of designing the interview study, justifying the use of the expert sampling method and discussing its challenges. It also presents the reader with an interviewee database, of which an extended version is supplied in Appendix F. The chapter then proceeds to explain the process of conducting the interviews, focusing on the process of crafting the interview guide and working with the interviewees. Following this, it explores the

data analysis process, looking at the art of transcription, coding and extrapolating themes. It then discusses the ethical issues linked to this thesis, offering assurances that the researcher has conducted this research in good faith. The chapter then closes with a reflection on the researcher's identity as a Caribbean national and acknowledging the impact that this has on this research. It is hoped that this chapter has charted the complexity of the research process in its entirety, and thus gives the reader an understanding of how it has evolved from beginning to end.

Chapter Five: Brand and Cultural Policy in the Caribbean

This chapter explores the intersection between brand and cultural policy across the Caribbean. As discussed in Chapter Two, an emergent need for economic diversification and the subsequent re-prioritisation of the creative industries has meant that the region's national agencies have been increasing their investment in the creative economy, particularly through the development of cultural policy. As this chapter will show, the Caribbean creative economy has long been challenged by an absence of effective national and regional cultural policy and it is this lack of institutional support which has shaped the distinct context out of which Caribbean brands are born. The chapter also highlights the diversity that exists across national cultural policy frameworks and the fact that this lack of consensus comes with adverse implications where Brand Caribbean is concerned.

Section 5.1 begins by describing the Caribbean's cultural policy landscape, exploring both the national and regional context and discussing the types of organisations and processes which impact cultural policy creation. It also examines the relevant current legislation that exists within the region, focusing on fiscal and trade related measures, intellectual property regulations and the provision of information and market development services. Following this, Section 5.2 explores both the presence and absence of brand in both national and regional policy frameworks. Using a selection of cultural policy documents, it studies the ways in which brand is incorporated, as well as noticeably overlooked and offers a few explanations regarding why it may have been excluded by policymakers. Section 5.3 closes the chapter with some discussion around the practical application of these policies, highlighting some of the core issues faced by the region's cultural producers.

Including this chapter that focuses specifically on cultural policy allows the reader to develop a greater understanding of the complex and diverse institutional frameworks across the

regional creative economy, so that they can better grasp the role which brand plays within it. Understanding the policy landscape also allows the reader to comprehend how regional institutions value the creative economy, since the design of policy mechanisms illustrates the role that governing organisations have assigned to it. In exposing the reader to both of the above, it is hoped that they are better able to contextualise the lived experiences and narratives which regional cultural producers relate in thesis' subsequent analysis chapters.

5.1 The Policy landscape in the Caribbean

5.1.1 An introduction to national policy frameworks

The relationship between the creative industries and cultural policy is an inherently tension-filled one, requiring constant negotiation between cultural stakeholders and governing bodies. While the specificities of this relationship change dependent upon the particular political context, there are universal debates that arise across a range of issues including implementation, social development, economic development, management and the institutionalisation of frameworks (Matarasso and Landry, 1999). Over time, as cultural policy discussions have evolved, universal similarities have emerged, with two prominent academics proposing there are four key concepts that drive most cultural policy frameworks: “the romantic notion of the isolated artist-genius who works for the love of art, typically suffering poverty in a garret room; culture is a pure public good, one that should be equally available to all; the true value of art is transcendent and can be determined by experts, commonly accompanied by the idea that the monetary value of art is false and the 'market' cannot decide; and an idealist-humanist notion that culture is 'good for the soul', and that exposure to 'culture' has a 'civilising effect’” (Hesmondhalgh and Pratt, 2005, p.10).

It is no different in the Caribbean, where regional policy is further complicated by a highly competitive political climate. With government elections carded for every four to five years, career politicians are mindful of investing time and energy in sectors where the political and economic returns are hefty, and more importantly, quite visible. The creative industries do not offer an opportunity for much political gains since their current state requires essential infrastructural groundwork, which earns little visibility. As one interviewee explained:

“... it’s easier to focus on trade because the return on those investments are quick to see and they’re a political win...Culture stirs passion in people. Culture is something that you hold true, you hold dear to your heart, so that is something that you have to work over generations to change. So that makes it a bit more difficult. You won’t see the returns in your political lifetime. And you see the thing about it is that, we don’t look at ourselves in blocks of fifty years, we look at ourselves in blocks of four years or the length of the political career.” (Halcyon, Entertainment Executive, Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment, Jamaica)

Politicians simply do not have the luxury of investing in a sector whose returns cannot be translated into political capital in time for the next election cycle. It is this short-sightedness that remains a key reason why there is an absence of effective cultural policy and legislation specifically crafted for the region’s creative industries.

Added to this, cultural policy frameworks are somewhat underdeveloped in quite a few of the region’s territories. As Table 3 (below) illustrates, of the fifteen CARICOM nations, only five (Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Jamaica and St. Lucia) have instituted a national cultural policy, while the remainder either have drafts in construction or no policy to date. However, while many nations have not produced national policy specifically for the cultural sectors, these sectors are not entirely overlooked, as a few islands have developed agencies to manage the cultural sector.

Table 3: CARICOM Member States and their Cultural Policy Frameworks

CARICOM STATES	NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY FRAMEWORK
Antigua and Barbuda	Ministry of Trade, Commerce & Industry, Sports, Culture & National Festivals No national cultural policy to date
The Bahamas	Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture Draft National Cultural policy under construction since 2006
Barbados	Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth National Cultural Foundation National Cultural policy published in 2010 Launched Cultural Industries Development Act in 2013
Belize	Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports and Culture National Institute of Culture and History National cultural policy published in 2016
Dominica	Ministry of Youth, Sports, Culture & Constituency Empowerment Dominica Festivals Committee; The Dominica Institute for the Arts; The National Cultural Council National cultural policy published in 2007
Grenada	Ministry of Tourism, Civil Aviation and Culture Grenada Cultural Foundation; Spice Mas Corporation Draft national cultural policy published in 2006
Guyana	Ministry of Education – Department of Culture, Youth and Sport No national cultural policy to date
Haiti	Ministry of Culture; Ministry of Tourism and Creative Industries No national cultural policy to date
Jamaica	Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport Jamaica Cultural Development Commission; Institute of Jamaica; National cultural policy published in 2003
Montserrat	Ministry of Finance, Economic Development, Tourism and Culture Draft national cultural policy under construction since 2012
St. Lucia	Ministry of Tourism, Information and Broadcasting – Creative industries department Cultural Development Foundation National cultural policy published in 2002
St. Kitts and Nevis	Ministry of Education, Youth, Sport and Culture; St. Kitts Department of Culture Draft national cultural policy under construction since 2010
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	Ministry of Tourism, Sports and Culture Carnival Development Corporation 'National cultural policy project' to develop policy launched in 2011
Suriname	Ministry of Education, Science and Culture No national cultural policy to date.
Trinidad and Tobago	Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts ⁴⁵ Inaugural national cultural policy published in 1996 Draft national cultural policy under construction since 2004 Trinidad and Tobago Creative Industries Company launched 2013

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⁴⁵ This Ministry was known as the Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism when this thesis' field research was conducted.

Additionally, the role of culture is always assessed, albeit in a cursory fashion, within the national strategic plans that the ruling governments typically present every five to ten years. These strategic plans outline the government's ambitions regarding economic and social development, as well as strategies to increase the profitability of that nation's key cultural outputs. And as the need for diversification has increased across the region, governments have begun to pay more attention to the creative industries and search for new ways to incentivise their growth.

In line with this newfound agenda, regional governments have tried to tackle creative sector growth through a few policy-based initiatives. In 2002, music and entertainment were incorporated into the National Industrial Policy of Jamaica, a change that was hailed as a landmark decision since it was one of the first times that cultural sectors were truly being acknowledged by policy makers. However, despite the slow inclusion of culture into national strategy plans, national governments do not do enough for the creative industries. In the interviews conducted for this research, most industry stakeholders (both public and private sector) argue that national policy interventions are insufficient and have no real influence on the creative industries. As one interviewee bluntly stated:

“They don’t know their a*s from their elbow and they don’t know what they doing and they regressive and keep taking the whole thing back generations. They’re still trying to figure out what it [creative industries] is...They’re not building the sector.... They just mashing up and scorching the earth and amassing everything onto themselves. And they have no plans. All they have is agendas, not plans.” (Christopher, Artist – singer, writer, producer and director).

This type of frustration regarding government policy is a common sentiment among industry stakeholders and particularly amongst creatives who are aware that their sector is not a national priority and that the policies which govern it do not acknowledge the idiosyncrasies

of the sector, since in many cases the policies were created for alternative sectors, with the creative industries being included as an after-thought.

Added to this, many are aware that the primary focus of any existent cultural policy is economic gain, with little interest in socio-cultural development. In fact, during the interview process many respondents argued that the recent interest that governments have shown in creating policy is merely a knee-jerk reaction to global economic change. Specifically in Trinidad, interviewees expressed the belief that the creative industries have only become a central focus in light of the collapse of the oil industry,⁴⁶ as the government is now forced to look to culture and other historically ignored sectors as sources of income. Stella, a prominent designer, expressed this sentiment saying “what’s happening now with oil and gas might be a blessing in disguise, because you know governments, Caribbean governments have to look at other avenues to earn revenue. And the creative industry is really a much overlooked industry”. Her opinion was validated months later, when in January of 2016 the Trinidad and Tobago government declared the country to be in a recession and reaffirmed its commitment to investing in alternative sectors, including culture, as a means of earning revenue. Still, regardless of the motivations, national governments have made small strides to try to bolster their national creative economies through policy. However, as the following section explains, cultural policy still remains a complicated area, not least because national policy has to work within a framework that is an amalgamation of national, regional and transnational policies.

⁴⁶ The Trinidad and Tobago economy is heavily dependent on the energy sector which earns 34.9% of the country’s GDP. The nation has been hard hit by the oil industry’s decline, which has seen the price of a barrel of oil drop by approximately 70% since June of 2014.

5.1.2 *An introduction to regional and transnational policy frameworks*

Regional cultural policy remains a complicated field because it has the added complexity of having to accommodate for disparities across national policy and governance practises. These challenges are further compounded by the fact that most of the region's territories are still categorised both locally and internationally as 'small island developing states'⁴⁷. This designation, along with its social, economic and political implications means that development goals are the national priority and as such, certain sectors, including culture are often relegated to the side-lines as resources are channelled into more financially viable sectors.

Policy initiatives in the 'developing' world also come with additional challenges. According to the UNCTAD/UNDP *Creative Economy Report 2010*, key policy challenges faced by developing nations include: (i) the inadequate integration of cultural objectives into the economic, technological and social policies; (ii) inadequate dissemination of policies, legislation and regulations related to culture and the creative economy, to enhance better understanding of their cultural and economic value to all relevant stakeholders; (iii) poor institutional capacity to articulate, implement, monitor and evaluate policies, strategies, programmes and projects, contributing to weak delivery; (iv) lack of linkages and networking among institutions; and (v) excessive dependence on the government by cultural and creative practitioners. (UNCTAD, 2010, p. 219)

As these challenges are all present across the Caribbean, it is unsurprising that CARICOM has struggled to deal with cultural policy on a regional scale. In terms of an overarching regional

⁴⁷ Small Island developing states (SIDS) are "a distinct group of developing countries facing specific social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities. SIDS were recognized as a special case both for their environment and development at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), also known as the Earth Summit, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil [3–14 June 1992]" (United Nations Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, 2011).

cultural policy framework, the last policy which CARICOM itself published was in 1996⁴⁸ (examined in section 5.2). Apart from this, as the literature review illustrated, the culture arm of CARICOM has commissioned several pieces of research from academics and consultants and formed sub-committees such as Regional Culture Committee (RCC) and the Regional Task Force on Cultural Industries,⁴⁹ all geared towards fuelling its bid for the implementation of regional cultural policy regimes. Other arms of CARICOM such as the CARICOM Office of Trade Negotiations (OTN), formerly known as the CARICOM Regional Negotiating machinery (CRNM) have also invested in the research and development of the creative sector policy.

In addition to the few aforementioned regional initiatives, the Caribbean creative economy has also benefited from transnational policy initiatives. In his book *The Creative Industries: Culture and Policy* (2012), Terry Flew outlines what he calls the developing countries model of cultural policy, which he considers to be primarily fuelled by transnational initiatives, usually orchestrated by the United Nations (Flew, 2012). Through organisations such as UNSECO, UNDP and the UNCTAD, the UN has certainly been a key driver in the funding of research, as well as the design and implementation of policy frameworks across the developing world (See UNDP and UNESCO *Creative Economy Report 2013 Special Edition*; UNCTAD/UNDP *Creative Economy Report 2010*). The UN has also published several pieces of research conducted by regional consultants which have contributed to the greater understanding of the local market and context (See Witter, 2002; James 2001; Hamilton 2002; UNCTAD 2002; Kozul-Wright and Stanbury, 2001). Similarly, other international organisations, such as the World Intellectual Property organisation (WIPO), World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the Inter-

⁴⁸ Given that this document is outdated and fails to address the contemporary challenges of the global market, in 2015 CARICOM invited tenders from consultancy firms for the compilation of a 'Regional Strategic plan for cultural and entertainment services/cultural industries in CARIFORUM states'.

⁴⁹ This is a twenty member task force launched in 2008 that remains largely inactive.

American Development Bank (IDB) have also contributed to research and policy surrounding the Caribbean's creative economy.

Overall, given the national, regional and transnational research that has been conducted, it is evident that there is an interest in the region's creative industries. However, this interest has not translated into implementable policy. While both regional and international organisations will fund research, the research projects are small and commissioned on an individual basis, meaning there is little or no opportunity for the results to be synthesised. Without assimilating all these results into a larger argument, stakeholders do not have the proof they need to convince both national and regional policy makers to implement policy and legislation to support the creative economy's development.

5.1.3 An overview of current legislation

According to UNCTAD, national cultural policy, specifically in trade-based creative sectors, is usually implemented through the following avenues: “fiscal measures (subsidies, tax concessions, investment allowances, business start-ups); regulation (copyright, local content quotas, planning laws, regulations on foreign direct investments); trade-related measures (import quotas, etc.); education and training (direct or subsidized provisions of services); provision of information and market development services; international cooperation (cultural exchange, cultural diplomacy); and social security and welfare policy (including measures to protect cultural diversity)” (UNCTAD/UNDP Creative Economy Report 2010, p. 213).

Given the regions 'developing nations' designation and the unstructured nature of both national and regional creative sectors, many of these measures are not present. However, the following sections examine some of the few measures in place, so that the reader may better understand the context within which brand operates.

Fiscal and trade-related measures

Across the region, there are few fiscal measures in effect which benefit the creative industries. Among the most notable is CARICOM's 'Common external tariff's list of conditional duty exemptions', which allows for 'cultural inputs' being used for specific purposes to receive either a full or partial exemptions, reducing costs for the import of equipment, instruments and other cultural products. However, as a review by the CRNM illustrates, there are a few key limitations, starting with the lack of clarity in the legislation, which makes it difficult to determine what constitutes 'a good that will be used for cultural purposes'. This often leads to disputes which result in customs mislabelling cultural goods as personal items. Another issue is the fact that exemptions apply only to import duty and do not include the many other taxes that can be applied at border control, meaning that imports can still be costly. Furthermore, the legislation stipulates that each territory reserves the right to deny exemptions based on their own discretion, meaning that the majority of regional stakeholders ultimately fail to benefit from this legislation.

Similarly, tax schemes, while well-intentioned also often prove to be less useful than anticipated, often because they fail to target the root of industry problems. In a paper exploring regional policy and multilateral trade agreements, Suzanne Burke (2011) presents the example of CDs. She explains that CDs which have been sent abroad for production (due to the lack of local facilities) are taxed when they are imported, whilst blank CDs, which fuel the piracy trade are not taxed. With holes such as these, the tax exemption policies fail to address many of the distinct issues that undermine both the formal and the informal means of cultural production across national and regional cultural sectors.

In light of these shortcomings, industry stakeholders have been appealing to governments for more purposeful and sector-specific tax exemptions. As Rita, a public sector official explained:

“If I am to work as a designer in the Caribbean and be able to manufacture clothes, while you provide a tax holiday for the man who is building a hotel, what’s the tax holiday for me? Because a lot of my raw material has to be imported. If you are developing for example the film sector, all the material except of course for the talent has to be imported.” (Rita, Executive – Culture Division, Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism, Trinidad)

As Rita illustrates, the lack of supportive legislation for the creative industries becomes even more glaring when compared to other national sectors such as tourism, where governments invest heavily in making the sector attractive for potential investors. The government’s lack of interest in incentivising investment in the creative industries (with the exception of the film industry) through tax exemptions continues to hinder the creative economy’s growth.

With few benefits to be gained from tax exemptions, creative industry stakeholders have turned to trade policy for respite, again without much results. Trade policy is often difficult to apply to the creative industries because of both the nature of the goods and the informality of the cultural sectors. For example, in many cases, items such as feathers which are used for carnival costumes cannot be easily identified as cultural goods, and as such trade laws cannot be easily applied. Similarly, tracking the trade flows of creative services also proves problematic again due to the sector’s informality. According to the region’s leading creative economy expert, Keith Nurse, there are four ‘modes of supply’ across regional creative services: Cross border supply (when suppliers service many islands via telecommunication); consumption abroad (when consumers access service from other islands); commercial presence (when businesses expand and set up overseas offices) and movement of natural people [the artists etc.] (Nurse, 2009). Of these, the area which has benefited significantly from trade policy is the movement of people across the islands, a move which was facilitated through the creation of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy and the introduction of a

CARICOM passport. This has proven particularly beneficial for the region's musical artists who make their living performing live on the festival circuit, making this initiative the most successful for creative sector stakeholders to date.

Intellectual property regulations

Another avenue for policy intervention for the creative industries is intellectual property (IP) regulation. As discussed in the Chapter Two, IP management remains one of the region's biggest challenges and in an attempt to tackle the rampant piracy which undermines local creative production, policy makers have been trying to strengthen IP laws, a large task in such informal industries. The music sector has made strides, as there are now copyright organisations representing almost every regional territory,⁵⁰ with the Association of Caribbean Copyright Societies (ACCS), now acting as a regional link for these national copyright bodies.

Still despite these advances, regional IP laws remain tantamount to suggestions, since they are not enforceable:

“...legislation although it is there, it basically has no teeth. Every country in the Caribbean has a copyright act, but, what is the regulation to the copyright act that says somebody is not complying, and the police can do so and so forth. So although we have the act, the regulations to the act need to be much better.”

(Denise, Executive, Jamaica Association of Composers, Authors and Publishers)

As Denise explains copyright in the Caribbean is all bark and no bite, as violations need to be handled through the court system where the cost of litigation and the heavy backlog are both significant deterrents for action. Thus while the shoring up of IP law and launching

⁵⁰ Examples of these include the Copyright Music Organisation of Trinidad and Tobago (COTT), the Jamaican Association of Composers, Authors and Publishers (JACAP) and the Copyright Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (COSCAP) in Barbados.

organisations which educate stakeholders on their rights are well-intended initiatives, to date, their usefulness remains debatable.

Provision of Information and Market-development services

Across the region, there has also been a movement to launch agencies or committees⁵¹ specifically devoted to the creative industries. Alongside their respective national ministries (usually the Ministry of Culture), these agencies become the national arm responsible for monitoring and facilitating the growth of the sector, and liaising with stakeholders so as to foster positive relationships between them and the state. However, these initiatives have not always proven successful in affecting change within the sector, often because a complex institutional framework means that there is very little inter-agency collaboration. So while the creative industries would benefit from cross-sectoral relationships (particularly with sectors like tourism and trade), there is little infrastructure to support this. Even internal infrastructure is lacking as many of these agencies are underfunded, leading to many being inaccessible even via online platforms since they lack functioning websites. The inability to engage with cultural producers, as well as the public, grossly undermines the efficacy of these organisations and results in their programmes being heavily underutilised.

The efficiency of these organisations is also impeded by the profound distrust shown towards them by cultural producers. For example in 2013, when Trinidad and Tobago launched The Trinidad and Tobago Creative Industries Company (Creative TI), the move was met with extreme hostility from industry stakeholders. The animosity stemmed from the decision to lump all of the creative industries together, in the process dismantling organisations such as the Trinidad and Tobago Film Company, which stakeholders had taken years to build. One interviewee described the transition, saying:

⁵¹ See Table 3 above that outlines national cultural policy frameworks for a listing of these agencies.

“If you’re seeking to make players rather than deal with the people who exist because it’s not convenient to you, or your politics or whatever, then you’re innovating while ignorant of the constant. You’re attempting to machinate a scene. You don’t destroy or negate or ignore what already is because it’s not convenient for you to deal with it, and come with some other plan, and bring people in by the side.” (Christopher, Artist – singer, writer, producer and director).

This disregard for the stakeholders and the foundation they had laid was met with contempt and protest. Furthermore, the government made it clear that their aims were solely economic in nature as even today the company’s mandate remains “to stimulate and facilitate the business development and export activities in Trinidad and Tobago to generate national wealth” (Creative TT, 2016). This continued disregard for the social and cultural value of the creative work produced, has only served to further the divide between industry and government, which further stunts the creative economy’s growth.

In conclusion, it is quite evident that both the national and regional policies and legislation examined above are insufficient to support the growth of the region’s creative economy. This is largely due to the fact that these policy schemes are not developed specifically for the creative industries, and consequently they fail to address the sector’s specific needs. The following section builds on this and proceeds to explore how brand fits into these policy discussions.

5.2 The presence and absence of brand discourse in policy frameworks

In an effort to understand the role of brand, it was necessary to determine where it was positioned within regional cultural policy frameworks. This proved to be a difficult task, not least because often the word ‘brand’ or even ‘nation brand’ are not commonly used. However, although the term was not explicitly mentioned, it was evident that elements of brand were still being discussed. This section examines a selection of the key cultural policy documents produced throughout the region in an effort to determine not only where brand is present, but also where it is glaringly absent. Analysing the way in which brand exists, albeit sometimes informally, is critical for this thesis which will try to prove its importance within the local creative economy. Likewise identifying its absence and the reasons why it may have been overlooked by national and regional policymakers, can also provide insight into the strategic approach currently at play across the regional economy. The sample being analysed comprises of CARICOM’s cultural policy, the national cultural policies published by the governments of Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica and Barbados, as well as excerpts from the national strategic plans from these islands. These documents are listed below:

- The Regional Cultural Policy of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)
- The Draft National Cultural Policy of Trinidad and Tobago
- The National Cultural Policy of Jamaica
- Vision 2030 Jamaica: The National Development Plan for Jamaica– Culture, Creative Industries and Values
- The National Cultural Policy for Barbados 2010
- The National Strategic Plan of Barbados 2005-2025

5.2.1 The Regional Cultural Policy of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)

CARICOM's cultural policy was published back in 1996, in response to UNESCO's call for a 'World Decade for Cultural Development' (1988-1997). However the policy, which is now over twenty years old, has yet to be updated and as such does not reflect the contemporary challenges Caribbean culture faces. When the policy was designed in the 1990s, it was a time of political upheaval, characterised by momentous events such as the Trinidad and Tobago coup in 1990 and Haiti's first democratic elections in 1991. Against this backdrop, it is unsurprising that in outlining the context for the cultural policy, CARICOM states that it "is to be located within the framework of the struggle for the democratic society" (CARICOM, 1996, p.4). Today however, Caribbean societies are not fraught with the political and social unrest seen twenty years ago, and thus it is important to recognise that the policy being outlined below was designed for a society which effectively no longer exists.

The policy was organised around five objectives: Culture and artistic promotion and development; Cultural heritage – preservation and protection; Culture and development; Cultural relations; and Cultural financing and administration. The policy goals which stemmed from these objectives included improved training for industry professionals; proper management and archiving of cultural heritage; recovery of patrimony; promoting gender equality; and procuring financing for cultural initiatives (CARICOM, 1996). Of these, the cultural relations objective is the most relevant to this thesis, since its goals were "to ensure the cross-fertilisation of the Caribbean cultural experiences" and "to promote closer cultural relations between the Caribbean, Latin America and the wider world" (CARICOM, 1996, p.26). These goals illustrate that even in the 1990s the region was interested in working towards regional integration. They also show that CARICOM was cognisant of the value of neighbouring markets and had an interest in expanding cultural distribution, particularly across Latin America.

While branding, marketing, or any sort of self- promotion regarding the region's role, image and reputation on a global stage, are not overtly addressed in this policy, the policy's core objectives do illustrate that the primary concern was developing a regional identity. This of course can be explained by the socio-cultural setting at the time where the Caribbean was beginning its struggle to define itself. However, over the last two decades, the Caribbean identity has evolved and become more concretised, and as societal, political and technological advances have diminished the size of the world, this identity and the cultural products within which it is manifested have been able to cross boundaries. Yet, there has been no move to update the policy to reflect both the evolution of the Caribbean identity, as well as the easier movement of goods and services across the globe. Notably, there has also been little advancement in the cause of regional integration, particularly from an institutional standpoint, with CARICOM still relying on events like the besieged CARIFESTA festival to foster cultural integration. These shortcomings of the regional policy, are critically important within the context of this thesis because (as discussed later in Chapter Seven), the notion of the Caribbean Brand is heavily jeopardised by the lack of regional integration and as the region's governing body CARICOM has been failing at its obligation to create and enforce policy that is geared towards alleviating the dissension which continues to impede the region's cultural development.

5.2.2 *The Draft National Cultural Policy of Trinidad and Tobago*

The first version of Trinidad and Tobago National Cultural Policy was published in 1996, the same year as CARICOM's cultural policy. However, in 2004, a new draft of the cultural policy was published, and it has since been redrafted three times with the most recent version (draft #4) published in 2013. The Trinidad and Tobago policy is unlike any other produced in the region because it is uniquely built around the theme of multiculturalism and in fact, the cultural policy was written in tandem with the 'National Policy Framework for Multiculturalism'. In the local context, multiculturalism "refers to the active respect for, and acknowledgement and support of, diverse artistic and cultural manifestations and activities" (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, 2013, p. 10), and regionally, Trinidad and Tobago is well known for its multicultural status, as a 'melting pot' of Indian, African, Asian European cultures, the outcome of its colourful colonialist history. Thus it is fitting that the policy makes it clear that the government's primary aim is to celebrate and sustain the cultural diversity that is present within the country.

The policy provides a brief historical context for the cultural sectors, sketches out national stakeholder organisations, lists sectoral legislation and compares the policy to local and international treaties⁵² in order to illustrate its alignment with their objectives. It also lists its four (4) priorities for cultural development which are: "1. Promotion of the Creative Arts and respect for the work of our creative people; 2. Preservation of Heritage both tangible and intangible. 3. Sustainable Cultural Industries Development and an awareness of the nexus between sustainable livelihood for persons directly involved in the arts and the sharing of our creative products and talents with the rest of the world. 4. Social Cohesion with an emphasis on the role of culture in family life and community development and the use of the arts

⁵² These include the Trinidad and Tobago Constitution, The Charter of the United Nations, and The Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

strengthen our national identity and to foster the spirit of unity in diversity.” (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, p. 14)

While the policy does not specifically address brand, some of the issues it addresses emerge throughout this thesis. For example, one of the first challenges listed was the tensions between nationalism and diversity, where the policy warns that “Multiculturalism must not be so positioned as to undermine national identity and cohesion” (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, 2013, p.5). The issue has parallels with the larger debate around Brand Caribbean (discussed in Chapter Seven), because in both cases the tension stems from wanting to celebrate diversity while simultaneously celebrating various national identities. The policy also addresses the issue of equity in an asymmetrical cultural sector, noting that certain ethnic groups, art forms and geographical areas are given more infrastructural support than others. This issue of equality is one that plays out indefinitely across the region and has implications for this thesis’ debates around Brand Caribbean, as to date Caribbean nations are still hesitant to participate in regional initiatives where benefits appear to be unevenly distributed. The policy notes that equity (where each is given what it needs), as opposed to equality (where each is given an equal share), may prove much more beneficial for cultural development within the regional context, and this idea is revisited in the conclusion chapter of this thesis.

Overall, the cultural policy produced by Trinidad, as represented in this document, does a great job of detailing the national context and highlighting the issues which affect the country. However, beyond this, the policy fails to provide any clear indication of how the government intends to support national cultural development, as it offers no concrete plans or strategies for the local creative economy. In short, in its present state, the policy can be described as communicative but not strategic, as it does not offer any actionable plans for cultural development.

5.2.3 *The National Cultural Policy of Jamaica*

The National Cultural Policy of Jamaica was published in 2003, although the government has indicated that it will soon be reviewed. The policy opens with an excerpt from a poem written by famed Jamaican-American writer Claude McKay entitled 'If we must die', of which the closing line reads: "*Like men, we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack, Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!*" This powerful epigram sets the tone for this policy and forewarns the defensive approach that the Jamaican government has adopted with respect to its national cultural economy. Titled 'Towards Jamaica the Cultural Superstate', the vision for the policy is clear, as are the aspirations of the government behind it.

This policy is quite expansive and explores the vast range of issues which feed into the territory's cultural sectors. The themes around which the policy is built are: Jamaicans and the world; cultural diversity; nurturing excellence; promoting cultural expression; culture and development; culture and education; heritage preservation and development; cultural industries and entrepreneurship; culture and trade; culture and tourism; technology and media; and infrastructure (Government of Jamaica, 2003). While brand is again not explicitly mentioned in this policy, many of the aforementioned themes are relevant to this thesis.

For example, the policy addresses the issues of the Jamaican national identity and highlights "the need to foster and promote as a means of priority our Caribbean and African international identity" (Government of Jamaica, 2003, p. 13). This drive to develop a Caribbean identity is a recurrent theme in all three national policies, as well as CARICOM's, and one which appears in this thesis. Still, the Jamaican policy delves deeper than most and calls for a historical reflection on the ways in which colonialism has shaped the Jamaican national identity and continues to affect the Jamaican psyche. It states: "This expression must take into consideration the reality of low self-esteem and inferiority that have affected the

thinking of our people over the aforementioned period of enslavement and colonialism, especially of the vast majority of the population of African descent. Yet, amid all this, there has been an assertiveness as our people have registered throughout our history great resilience and affirmation of our identity and being. The expression must also reflect on the inflated, even destructive air of superiority or distorted sense of being by certain sections of our population, also as a result of slavery and colonialism” (Government of Jamaica, 2003, p.7). As will be discussed further in Chapter Six, the colonialist framework within which most Caribbean islands are entrenched has had an indelible effect on identity. As such, understanding Jamaicans, and the way in which Jamaicans view themselves is important since it is this self-concept which is reflected, not only in their cultural products, but also in the way in which local cultural brands are constructed.

Brand also plays a critical role in cultural expression, another of the themes highlighted in this policy. It states: “Now there is an even greater need to ensure that more of our stories are told, and by us. As such it is urgent that there be support for efforts to promote local or regional publishing activities as well as to engage local/regional media in an understanding of the role they must play in telling the stories, particularly to our young people but also to the rest of the world. Our people need to see ourselves in film and on television, hear our voices on radio networks and through all communications media, to take the message as far afield as we would, based on provisions made through the global network” (Government of Jamaica, 2003, p.21). Again, due to the remnants of colonialist empires, today, Jamaica and Jamaicans are still often portrayed through exceedingly stereotypical caricatures. The desire for the Jamaican people to finally be the authors of their own tales is one of the key drivers behind the recently introduced Brand Jamaica campaign. This campaign offers an opportunity to work towards a self-authored and more authentic representation of Jamaica, Jamaicans and Jamaican culture, and in so doing fulfils the aims reflected in this policy.

Brand is also of course a key component of the Culture and Tourism aspect of this policy. Brand Jamaica, at its core is a mechanism for promoting Jamaica, and whilst this promotion may have numerous benefits, the key driver has and shall remain the strengthening of the tourist sector. As one interviewee – Ethel, co-founder of one of Jamaica’s leading Jazz festivals explained, “The only role Caribbean festivals play on the international market is to try and attract people to come to the Caribbean. There isn’t any other role.” As Ethel implies, in lieu of cultural development, culture has become a proxy for commercial tourism, its purpose being to bait tourist revenue. In this way Brand Jamaica has become an outlet through which the government can deliver a cohesive and coherent brand message which presents Jamaican culture as one of the island’s unique selling points.

Lastly, ‘Cultural Industries and Entrepreneurship’ is another of the policy’s themes that is also closely linked to brand and this thesis. In discussing it the policy states that: “The issue then is to develop strategies and mechanisms that would harness the elements of our cultural expression into meaningful, organized, systematic activities geared at the economic advancement of the entire community. When achieved, this will produce a widening of the scope for employment, a residual effect of pride and confidence in the community, and redound to the promotion of social well-ness and prosperity” (Government of Jamaica, 2003, p. 34). This excerpt illustrates that the Jamaican government acknowledges the contribution that the creative industries can make to national development. It also highlights the importance of organised and cohesive approach, which brand by its very nature can facilitate. Thus, it can be argued that some of the social and economic benefits outlined in the policy can be accessed through the application of brand strategy.

Ultimately, while brand is not explicitly mentioned in this policy framework it is evident that the now prolific Brand Jamaica campaign fits well within this national policy. Still, much like Trinidad and Tobago’s policy, it is much more reflective than actionable. However, in 2009 as

part of the ‘Vision 2030: The National Development plan for Jamaica’, the government produced a sector-specific strategic plan for ‘Culture, Creative industries and Values’ which outlined sector goals, offered feasible strategies, gave a timeframe for implementation and even detailed which organisations were responsible for each remit. Of the many goals listed, one that is particularly relevant is Goal 4, which is to establish a nation brand which can “support social, cultural and economic development” (Government of Jamaica, 2009, p. 96). The strategic plans for this goal included incorporating the nation brand into the cultural policy, revising other relevant policies to support the nation brand, strengthening legislation which can bolster the brand (e.g. IP; patent act; copyright act), establishing organisations to manage the brand and developing a national brand strategy (Government of Jamaica, 2009, pp. 96-101). These guidelines are arguably the most specific and actionable plans that have been produced for a nation brand within the region and thus it is no surprise that to date Brand Jamaica remains the region’s most successful nation brand.

5.2.4 The National Cultural Policy for Barbados 2010 and The National Strategic Plan of Barbados 2005-2025

The national cultural policy of Barbados, which takes some cues from CARICOM's regional cultural policy was published in 2010. The policy, which is relatively short, lists eleven broad objectives, the most noteworthy being: "to make culture an integral part of cultural development; to promote a greater sense of national unity, confidence and self-sufficiency; to refine and strengthen the Barbadian identity; to promote respect for and preservation of Barbados' cultural heritage; and to establish an infrastructure which will facilitate the development of the economic potential of the creative sector" (Government of Barbados, 2010, p. 9-10).

Stemming out of these objectives, the policy framework is built around fifteen key themes: "Barbados in the global arena, culture and national development; promoting a culture of excellence; promoting national pride and identity; cultural diversity; cultural heritage preservation and protection; culture, trade and the cultural industries; culture and education; culture and tourism; culture and sports; culture and agriculture; culture and health; culture and technology; culture and mass media; implementation and review" (Government of Barbados, 2010, p. 11). Of these, one which proves particularly significant is the 'trade and cultural industries' remit, which talks about the need to "change the traditional view of culture as a 'soft sector' and that it be included in mainstream economic activity and as such, treated as a dynamic catalyst in the development of a diversified economy"(Government of Barbados, 2010, p.18). The fact that the cultural industries are treated poorly in the region is one of the claims that this thesis has repeatedly made, and the Barbadian government's recognition of this and its stated commitment to developing legislation and infrastructural support to bolster the sector's production and distribution capabilities, is a positive step for their local economy.

Aside from this, the policy also makes another relevant point in relation to the relationship between tourism and culture, where the policy discusses the need to get all Barbadians to participate in the tourism industry. The thinking behind this is that the tourism product is really an experience and thus nationals need to contribute to the tourist experience. This ideology has implications for this research, because like tourist experience, brand too is experiential in nature, and as such requires nationals to contribute towards building the shared national brand identity.

Now while the cultural policy does not mention brand at all, the Barbados Strategic Plan for 2005-2025, much like Jamaica's national plan, explicitly speaks to brand. While it does not specifically address it within the context of culture, it does posit that brand "can be used to assert leadership in the global economy" (Barbados Strategic Plan, 2005, p. 38). It also lists 'Branding Barbados globally' as one of the nation's six national strategic goals and outlines its aims to "identify, sharpen and unify that positive 'brand image' of Barbados and use it to market Barbados politically, culturally and in the areas of our greatest economic strength, tourism and international business and financial services" (Government of Barbados 2005, p.38).

What is interesting about this strategic plan is that it recognises that the Barbados brand is not yet fully developed, and as such, it outlines two goals: (1) fashioning the brand and (2) marketing the brand. The plan proposes a variety of strategies for building Brand Barbados which include: "identifying and promoting the nation's key values, promoting a nationwide celebration of the Barbados brand, establishing mechanisms to protect intellectual property rights, and utilising the products and services for which Barbados is renowned (under which culture is listed)" (Government of Barbados, 2005). Acknowledging culture's contribution to Brand Barbados, and committing to using cultural products to help further the nation brand's global status, is an intelligent brand building strategy that has served the nation well to date.

The second part of the strategy focuses on how to market Brand Barbados, although here the line between marketing and branding blurs. One of the first strategies listed is “Use the Barbados Brand (which may include several icons or images united by a common theme) to market Barbados globally, so that whatever the product or service exported it is recognised immediately as distinctively Barbadian” (Government of Barbados, 2005. p. 88). This strategy is based on developing a cohesive brand image, and strengthening this image so that it becomes uniquely Barbadian. The second proposed strategy refers to coordinating the brand message across government agencies, private sector stakeholders and the public. The strategic plan also mentions reaching out to the diaspora to encourage their promotion of Brand Barbados.

Overall, this policy which outlines a strategic plan for Brand Barbados, is one of the few regional policy documents that incorporates both culture and brand. In this way, it is a trailblazer for the region in terms of a creative, carefully planned and integrated approach to cultural sector governance which is built on the strength of a brand. It can be argued that this strategic plan, which has been executed for the past eleven years is a key reason why this small nation of only 288,000 nationals has been able to craft such a strong global presence and build a name for themselves on the international market.

Explaining Brand's Absence

As is evident from the analyses above, brand is often overlooked in both national and regional cultural policy. There are several reasons for this, the most obvious being that brand is a relatively novel concept within the field. The term does not have a longstanding history in regional political discourse, since it is only in recent years that governments have taken notice of brand, and its prospective influence in national sectors. In fact, prior to this governments favoured terms like ‘marketing’, ‘promotions’, and ‘public relations’, as seen in the “National

strategy and action plan to further develop the Jamaican music industry”, which lists the need to “Develop a comprehensive marketing and publicity strategy for the industry” as a top priority (Brown 2004, p.10). The concept of developing a cohesive and strategic brand campaign, has only come to light recently and while discussed, it has not been written into the legislature.

Another reason why brand may not be explicitly addressed in cultural policy is that brand is usually addressed in alternative national sectors. For example, nation branding, a concept previously described in the Chapter Three as critical for the promotion of national cultural products, is often only explored in relation to the tourism sector. For example, consider that the tourism chapter of the Trinidad and Tobago National Strategic Plan states that the sector aims “To define and enhance Trinidad and Tobago’s brand reputation by upgrading accommodations to the highest of international standards (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, 2005, p. 261). Placing brand solely in the purview of the tourism sector is a common practice and whilst as a researcher it is easy to acknowledge the linkages between the production of cultural products and brand, on a national level, governments have been slow to understand the benefits of these connections, and as such, brand is rarely incorporated into cultural sector analyses and policies.

Interestingly however, brand and brand strategy are slowly becoming popularised and integrated into other national sectors, such as trade and investment. Take for instance, Invest Barbados, a national agency who states that it is “responsible for helping to develop and manage the Barbados international business brand” (Invest Barbados, 2016). Developments such as these are particularly exciting because they show that regional governments are beginning to recognise the various sub-brands that can evolve out of their national brand. Still, as the policies above show, they still fail to recognise the value of incorporating brand strategy into the cultural sectors.

5.3 Brand in practise across government frameworks

While the sections above explain the role of brand across regional policy frameworks it is also important to consider its practical application. In investigating this, it became clear that on a national scale, there are few, if any, guidelines about the nation brand. Similarly, there was very little institutional guidance that extended to a regional level. In reality both national and regional brand management is decidedly haphazard. In speaking about her experience in the Jamaican public service where there are very broad guidelines for the nation brand, Halcyon explained:

“Well in terms of sponsorship of events, sponsorship endorsements, JTB has specific guidelines for all of those. So they are some events that they won’t sponsor... You won’t sponsor pornography, you won’t sponsor those things that are repulsive to the average person. There may well be certain people who you wouldn’t want to, any brand wouldn’t want to align themselves with for whatever reason...Illegal activities you are not going to align yourself to, especially as a government because we always have to remember that we’re spending tax payers’ money. And so yeah, there are some very broad guidelines that we have to follow.” (Halcyon, Entertainment Executive, Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment, Jamaica).

Similarly, Joseph, another interviewee also explained that in his role as one of the purveyors of the national brand, there was little guidance apart from the general goal of promoting the island in a positive light. This lack of official directives on both a national and regional scale could suggest that both the nation brand and Brand Caribbean remain unfettered by bureaucratic intervention. However, as Neil explains, that is not so:

“I wouldn’t say that we have formal guideline per se, but we have years of practices. So for example there are guidelines on heights and stuff where you can

do billboards and those sort of things, those are town and country planning rules...

But I think there's a natural order that occurs that we probably learnt over the years. So it's quite natural." (Neil, Marketing professional, National Cultural Foundation Barbados)

Even without strategic plans or guidelines there is an implicit understanding about the type of image that both national brands, and by extension Brand Caribbean should present on the global market. This unspoken and tacit understanding of the brands and their goals are what ultimately guide the decision making process in public office.

The framework within which governments view brand, is of course strikingly different from the way in which cultural producers interpret brand. It is for this reason that many creatives expressed the sentiment that the government failed to understand the role of brand in the market. The interview data suggests that creatives believe that the government's understanding of brand is limited in that it is merely viewed as a tool for advancing financial profitability. As one interviewee put it:

"If you don't share the vision, or if you don't understand the vision, you wouldn't understand the potential long term. Marketing and branding from the governmental level is really not big on the agenda, they're more about how would it look." (Jordan, Founder and Director, National Fashion Show, Trinidad and Tobago)

According to the testimonies of the interviewees, it appears that regional governments have been solely focused on promotional advertising and it is this penchant for publicity that has often polarised these two stakeholder groups. While creatives do understand the need for publicity, the fact that it has become the primary focus is seen as evidence of the government's misguided aims. Consider the testimony of Christopher who described the

frustration of working with governmental agencies, whose focus is not culture or nation branding, but rather the promotion of their work as an agency:

“And whilst these agencies are set up they want their name above your name. Who gives a f-k about Creative TT out in a festival in Europe? Did Jamaica want to put ‘Jamaica presents Bob Marley’? Give me a f-king break. They have it all back to front. They have no respect for the artist, no respect for the cultural product, no respect for the culture.” (Christopher, Artist – singer, writer, producer and director).

The issue here is again that political priorities impede cultural development and macro-level branding. It is troubling that resources are being used to build the publicity of national agencies as opposed to promoting culture and the creatives who produce it in its many forms. This misappropriation of funds and overall short-sightedness further proves that the value of both national brands and Brand Caribbean is not fully understood by the region’s institutions.

Brand as an evolving entity

At present, the region’s primary challenge is trying to identify the core elements of both national and regional brands, so as to be able to move forward with brand development. Public servant Halcyon described this process as one of self- reflection:

“But what is it that sets us apart from you as a Trini? What is it that sets us apart from Cuba? It’s those things, the essence of that. Once we can articulate that as a people, it is then we start defining ourselves and distinguishing ourselves and really moving ahead of the pack.” (Halcyon, Entertainment Executive, Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment, Jamaica)

Of course, the difficulty of this on both a national, but particularly on a regional scale, lies in the multiplicity of entities which contribute to brand. The various national and regional governments and agencies, all of which have their own interpretations of what brand is, must be melded together. As Halcyon further explained “there are common threads in it that we need to, as policy makers, and as government, that we need to pick out of it”. However the act of pulling these threads together requires an effective communication framework which is presently non-existent in the region.

Still, on a national scale, in line with this aim of developing a firm grasp on what brand represents, a few governments are in the process of re-conceptualising their nation brands, with some even moving ahead with the re-branding of their cultural outputs. For example, three years ago St. Lucia re-branded its flagship jazz festival, a move which the brand executive Giselle explains was taken in order to reflect the infusion of St. Lucian culture and identity into the festival. She explains:

“It’s a unique brand...The brand speaks to the destination. So it is St. Lucia Jazz and Arts Festival and it is our jazz. It’s not the jazz you’ll find in New Orleans, it’s not any other Jazz, and it’s our version of what we think St. Lucia Jazz is. So it’s not straight-ahead jazz only. We’ve infused a mix of different genres in there to make it our own because we don’t want St. Lucia Jazz to be similar to any other Jazz festival. So we create our own brand. It’s not what anybody thinks a jazz festival should be, but what we the destination believe our St. Lucia Jazz to be.”

(Giselle, Marketing executive, St. Lucia Tourist Board)

It is clear that Caribbean nations are working toward national identity formation and beginning to find new ways in which to celebrate their unique cultural offerings. This evolution of brand on a national level of course has implications for Brand Caribbean given that it is a composite of these national brands. Moreover, as the region’s nations move closer

to self-understanding, it is only a matter of time until they are able to reconceptualise their ideas on what being Caribbean means, and acknowledge the Caribbean identity and the value of Brand Caribbean.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to afford the reader a greater understanding of the regional policy landscape, so that they can grasp the context within which the thesis' analysis is situated. The chapter first looks at national policy frameworks, detailing the infrastructural support available in each of the CARICOM member nations and highlighting that of the fifteen states, only five have completed national cultural policies. A subsequent review of regional policy frameworks shows a similar deficit of effective policy, as it reveals that the region's governing body still relies on an outdated cultural policy created twenty years ago. Following this a review of the current legislation in place for the sector also paints a grim picture as the various fiscal, trade, intellectual property and market development initiatives are proven to be largely ineffective.

In exploring all of the above, it becomes evident that the regional cultural policy landscape is far from homogenous. The diversity amongst national policy frameworks illustrates the fact that some nations value the creative economy more than their counterparts. The disparities across policy infrastructure also show that some islands are better placed to encourage or stimulate creative sector growth and development than others. This lack of continuity across the region is particularly significant because it understandably plays a large part in the debates around collective initiatives and regional integration, both of which will be addressed in Chapter Seven's discussions around Brand Caribbean.

This chapter also evaluated a selection of policy documents from each of the three core islands, as well as one from CARICOM. The documents clearly illustrate that cultural policy is

geared toward financial remuneration and that governments disproportionately calculate the social and cultural value of the creative sectors. Still, more importantly, the analysis shows that brand was not yet a major component in the cultural strategies of these nations. The absence of brand is particularly important because it not only validates the importance of this thesis, but it also informs the reader of the novelty of brand in regional creative economy discourse.

Finally, the closing section of this chapter presents some reflections on brand in practise. In discussing the absence of practical guidelines and a reliance on tacit knowledge, it shows the infantile state of brand management across creative industry stakeholders. Similarly, the criticisms that creatives expressed regarding the fact that governing bodies do not seem to grasp the significance of brand's impact within the creative economy, also further illustrate the novelty of brand within this sector and drive home the chapter's final argument about brand development being a continuous process that requires self-reflection, negotiation and creative expression.

Overall, all of the issues discussed in this chapter are important for helping the reader appreciate the intricacies of the regional policy landscape. Knowing the landscape is essential for contextualising the following analysis chapters where the writer aims to both illustrate the significance of brand and demonstrate that incorporating brand into national and regional strategies will not only reshape the policy discussion, but ultimately drive the growth of the creative industries in the region.

Chapter Six: Exploring Brand in the Caribbean Creative Economy

The analysis chapters in this thesis are organised around the five research questions outlined in the introduction chapter. Sections 6.1 through to section 6.3 explore the issues raised by the first research question, *RQ 1: How is brand understood, constructed and used by cultural producers within the Caribbean creative economy?* In an effort to develop a thorough response to the research question, Section 6.1 begins by examining the term ‘brand’ and describing the various ways in which it is defined and understood from the varying perspectives of the cultural producers in this study. It then goes on to critically analyse the role that brand plays in creative economy, specifically in terms of its newfound status as an industry ‘buzzword’. Section 6.2 explores the way brand emerges or is built by those within the region’s cultural sectors. Using the narratives and stories of the interviewees, the chapter examines the unique way in which regional brands develop, the relationships between brands and whether both of these change dependent on the idiosyncrasies of the specific cultural sector. Section 6.3 studies the strategic role that brand plays in the region’s creative economy, beginning by explaining the way in which brand has evolved into a defensive mechanism and a source of protection for the region’s cultural industry stakeholders. It then explores the role of the metabrand, as well as other strategic structural frameworks which allow the weaker creative sectors to draw strength from both other creative sectors and closely-related national industries.

The second part of this analysis chapter addresses the issues pertinent to *RQ 2: How does brand influence the dynamics of the Caribbean creative economy?* Having previously looked at the ways in which brand is interpreted and used by cultural producers, the next step is to move past these individual or institutional relationships (in the case of government policy) and explore the wider role that brand has within this creative economy. As such, the chapter moves on to explore two intriguing ideas that were unearthed during the research process. Section 6.4

explores creativity and the idea that brand and brand expectations shape creative production and influence the type of cultural work that is created across the region. Following this, section 6.5 examines the concept of value and explores the idea that brand influences the ways in which people determine the value of the cultural work they engage with. Ultimately, it is hoped that through its analysis, this chapter can create a picture that is an accurate representation of the role of brand within the region's contemporary creative economy.

RQ 1: How is brand understood, constructed and used by cultural producers within the Caribbean creative economy?

6.1 Unpacking the term 'brand'

6.1.1 Definitions of brand in the Caribbean

As discussed in Chapter Three, 'brand' remains a complex and multi-faceted term. Understanding the term within the context of the Caribbean meant uncovering how cultural producers defined and articulated the role that brand plays in their work. Thus the intent here is to assess the various descriptions of brand and aggregate the common threads which emerged across these individual interpretations. One of the first ways in which the interviewees represented brand was as this ubiquitous and almost omnipotent component of cultural production. For example, Annalise, an internationally trained fashion designer based in Trinidad described brand as such:

"I say branding is everything because it's the first voice that you speak with before somebody even walks in your store, before somebody even buys something from you, that's the first thing they speak about, it's the brand." (Annalise, Fashion Designer, Trinidad)

This perception of brand forgoes the idea of seeing brand as a simple component of cultural production and reimagines it as an overarching element which pervades every aspect of it. Interpreting brand as the crux of creative work, gives brand a new prominence in the creative economy where it has habitually been over-simplified and regarded as an auxiliary element and quite often, an after-thought. The idea that brand is this intangible dimension that envelopes the entire cultural process from production through to circulation and consumption means that its role within the creative economy is much more critical and integral than is often acknowledged.

Somewhat related to the ubiquity of brand, is the idea that it is intimately woven into everyday life, becoming something of a cultural phenomenon. During discussions with Elizabeth, a government employee, when asked to define brand, she presents brand and culture as two interwoven elements, stressing that it is difficult to isolate brand from culture. She said:

“The branding varies. Sometimes it’s the language that’s used. Sometimes it’s the Rastafarian culture. Sometimes it’s the music, sometimes it’s our athletes, you know. So it varies accordingly, and it’s used according to the different sectors and different areas.” (Elizabeth, Executive Director, Cultural Heritage Organisation, Jamaica)

Here, Elizabeth paints a picture where brand is manifested in multiple ways – through language, religion, artistic expression and even people. This interpretation of brand is particularly important because it reinforces the idea that brand metamorphoses and shifts depending on the context. As such, it can be expressed through a multiplicity of forms, many of which are also cultural in nature.

The interviews also revealed that brand was also conceptualised in terms of cultural identity. As discussed in Chapter Three, brand is a tool through which cultural identity can be

reconstructed, and in this way identity and brand are indelibly linked. When asked the importance of brand, Avril, a marketing executive at the Caribbean Tourism Organisation⁵³ said simply “It’s important because your brand is your identity and that identity is very difficult to get across through clear messages”. Similarly Stella, a renowned fashion designer also reiterated that brand is the means through which one infuses identity into cultural work. She describes the role of brand in her work saying:

“It is done by a Caribbean designer, but I mean this can easily be translated by a French designer. So, I think that really, it’s in the way we brand our products. I mean, that is where the difference, or the uniqueness can come out – in the way it’s branded.” (Stella, Veteran fashion designer, Trinidad)

This interpretation of brand reveals that brand can be the tool that positions a piece of cultural work in a particular geographical or cultural context. It is brand that tethers a cultural product to the culture from which it is drawn, making it Caribbean, or Jamaican, and thus imbuing it with a cultural identity. Using brand as a means by which to stamp identity (be it personal, national or regional) on a cultural product facilitates cultural preservation, allowing a culture to lay its own claim, while simultaneously reinforcing its cultural myths. In this way brand can also be said to further cultural development since the goodwill generated from producing culture and having it recognised, validated and shared, can in turn encourage further production.

Apart from this cultural slant, interviewees also revealed that brand can be interpreted through a commercial lens. In talking with Justin, founder of one of the few regional event companies, he explained brand as such:

⁵³ The Caribbean Tourism Organisation is the official tourism agency for the region. It represents over thirty member nations and is funded by national governments who each contribute to a Regional Marketing Fund.

“Everybody has something special, everybody has a treasure and it’s kind of like using your treasures best as possible – showcasing it to the world. And still letting everybody know through sound marketing and great awareness, and great connectivity and great networking, that you are Caribbean, and this what you have to offer, this is what you have to put on the table Let’s see if you’re interested in this, let’s see if you’re going to buy into this, let’s see if you’re going to enjoy my product.” (Justin, Founder, Regional entertainment company)

Here brand is explained in its more traditional form, as a commercial tool through which cultural producers can attract potential consumers. But this definition also highlights the experiential side of branding and the importance of the consumer being able to buy-in to the essence of what is being offered, where the buy-in is dependent on how well the brand promise is sold to potential consumers. However, apart from this, the greater value in this characterization of brand is that it highlights the importance of networking and connectivity. A brand, particularly on a national or regional level is a product of a community effort, and as another interviewee Anthony explained, nationals are the “custodians, guardians and purveyors of the brand”, and thus people, relationships and networks play an indispensable role within the brand framework.

Overall, the diversity of interpretations for brand presented above is evidence of the fact that as a complex term it will always remain open for interpretation, especially in a field such as the creative economy where cultural producers have such an intimate relationship with their work and their brands. Of the interviewees questioned, only one, Anthony (an IP attorney), gave a standard textbook definition of brand as “the identifying characteristics and reputation that are attached and or related to particular product or service”. This shows that within the context of the Caribbean creative economy, brand has evolved past traditional definitions into

a more multifaceted role. It is for this reason that there will never be a singular interpretation of brand which is universally applicable across the Caribbean's creative economy.

6.1.2 *Brand as a 'buzzword'*

While many interviewees were able to articulate their understanding of brand and the impact it has on their work, on the opposite end of the spectrum, some felt that brand was simply a buzzword, meaning that its frequent appearance in industry parlance was based on its perceived trendiness, as opposed to the reflection of an actual and functional role within the regional creative economy. For example, Paul, a marketing executive at an international music label stated:

“I think when it comes to the idea of brand, it is definitely thrown around a lot, that word, but I don't know how much people really embrace it. Well I think people are using the word but in terms of what it really means, or having it be how people would make business decisions, or things being consistent and all of that, I don't really find that to be so much the case.” (Paul, Marketing Executive, VP Records)

Drawing on this opinion, one can infer that while brand has become a pervasive element of industry discourse, an understanding of brand, in a deep and holistic sense, was somewhat absent. In reality, despite the fact that brand was being discussed at length, the coherency and consistency that are essential to brand building was not always evident in the business practises and strategies of those working within the regional industry. Take for example the policy documents discussed in Chapter Five, which speak about brand, yet fail to provide any detailed guidelines regarding infrastructure or collaboration for ensuring the cohesiveness and consistency that a national branding initiative would require.

A fellow interviewee, Rita, also touched on this issue, stating that from her perspective as a public servant in Trinidad, the depth of brand is not really understood by industry and society at large. When questioned on the issue, she explained:

“It depends on what you call branding. Ok, if branding means that I will put some nice colours together and create a logo, and have a fancy buzzword name – We like to do that! ...Branding is just an attempt to cover up. Come on, your cake ain’t come out good but if you put enough icing sugar on it, it will look pretty. Until I cut the cake. At some point I’ve got to cut the cake.” (Rita, Executive – Culture Division, Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism, Trinidad).

She raises the interesting point that in the local context, it is not uncommon to encounter a narrow interpretation of brand, which is restricted to few choice components of brand. Now brand is a composite of many factors: brand image, brand meaning, brand personality, brand message etc. However locally, the focus falls on the more tangible and aesthetic components of the brand structure, such as brand imagery. While imagery is crucial, the overemphasis which is placed on it severely undermines the attention that is given to the other components.

Furthermore, what also became apparent during this research is that for some cultural producers, branding almost seemed to be limited to the production of branded merchandise. For example, when asked if the artists she engages with pay enough attention to brand, an executive at a national music collections agency responded:

“No they don’t but they should, because it is the brand that will sell the artist. Because now we are into merchandising and we’re into all that type of social media, so if you do have a brand, that is how you would get yourself out there.”

In talking with the owner of one the few music websites dedicated to regional music, he also equated branding with merchandising saying:

“I think they’re slowly developing like their brand strategy. It’s been kind of poor, in terms of they’re not really creating merchandise for themselves, even small things like t-shirts etcetera. People will buy them but they don’t have the mind-set to be like alright we need to create some t-shirts...They have learnt how important You Tube is, and social media in general, and they’re trying to tap into that.” (Gerald, Founder and Director, Jamaican Music Website)

These references where merchandising, marketing and branding were presented as synonymous highlights the fact that there is a level of incoherency around the concept of brand, and that the lines between these disciplines can blur easily for cultural producers. Of course, this may be due to the fact that cultural producers are intimately involved with all these disciplines and thus may not see the necessity in explicit differentiation.

Still, the idea that brand has been reduced to empty rhetoric or a hollow buzzword within the Caribbean’s creative economy does have some merit. With its growing popularity, the word ‘brand’ has become ubiquitous, and as a result, its description has become somewhat implicit. Since no one takes the time to discuss and negotiate the definitions and complexities associated with brand, the result is that many individuals, inclusive of cultural producers, are working around definitions of brand that are not only overly simplistic but also lacking in clarity. The multiplicity of deconstructions of what brand is or does that are at play across the regional creative economy continue to be an issue with which the industry grapples and as such it reoccurs throughout this thesis.

6.2 The construction of brand(s)

6.2.1 *The process of brand-building*

In light of this thesis' aim to explore the way brand develops in the Caribbean creative economy, interviewees were asked to recall their personal experiences. While each narrative was unique, commonalities were evident, and ultimately, three core approaches to brand building were identified. The first, and one of the more common ways in which cultural producers built brands, was through innovation, characterised by trial and error. As fashion designer Stella mused "when I first started, I played with a lot of different levels of clothing, and I stuck with the one that worked for me". Christopher, an artist also described a similar process for his 'Movement' brand.⁵⁴ He explains:

"As I say, it wasn't deliberate and conscious. We were just repping⁵⁵ us and being true to us. Working with the people around us who were close to our creative vibe...But you know just in that, there is a certain integrity and a certain resonance that people felt. So much so that we had to stop working in the mas camp and start singing full time because that was [initially] just a fun thing for us to do. So we felt the immediate power and the impact of putting something out there and it going beyond you, and then people saying we want some of this, and you having to respond to that." (Christopher, Artist – singer, writer, producer and director).

The organic and innovative approach described above makes cultural expression the primary determinant of the brand's growth and direction and as such the brand develops almost naturally without much deliberate intervention and planning on the part of the cultural producer. Thus, while it has been argued that artists produce in part for the various inherent

⁵⁴ Brand's title replaced by a pseudonym.

⁵⁵ 'Repping' is a colloquial term used to mean 'representing'.

and extrinsic rewards that the market provides (Towse, 2001), one can also see cultural work which is driven primarily by artistic integrity as opposed to commercial incentives.

At the other end of the spectrum, there were cultural producers who approached brand building as a strategic growth exercise within which “advertising and promotion always play a big role” (Ethel, Co-founder, National Jazz Festival, Jamaica). For example, when talking about building her fashion brand, Annalise described a more structured approach to brand:

“I mean you’ve got your obvious things like your logo is so important. The visibility. The identity. People see the logo and they know who it is...And after that, it’s things like the attitude of your brand. How do you market it? What are the visuals that are associated with your brand? The photo shoots that you do, the magazines that you appear in, the runway shows that you decide to participate in. I mean everything is very strategic. You have to be really strategic about where you place your brand. It’s not about oh I want exposure, so I’ll just be in any old show, or any old. I mean I cater to bridal so there are some places that I won’t necessarily be. Like you’re not going to see me in Upmarket⁵⁶ or whatever, and that’s not taking away from that, it’s just not conducive to my brand and what I do.” (Annalise, Fashion Designer, Trinidad)

Cultural producers who adopt this strategic method, pay keen attention to the core brand elements and give brand as much precedence as their creative outputs. Here, the intent is to create a well sculpted and cohesive brand identity that can then help bolster the strength of the creative output. Of course, this approach is more easily applied to some sectors than others, such as fashion which has the infrastructure to build a brand (e.g. magazines and shows), whereas the festival industry may lack these outlets. This approach to brand building is also particularly popular in the public sector since these organisations are involved in

⁵⁶ Upmarket is a monthly arts and craft fair held in the capital of Trinidad and Tobago.

supporting cultural production, rather than the production itself and thus can focus principally on brand and marketing strategy.

The third approach to brand-building is a client-centric approach, where the needs of consumers direct the brand. This approach affords the consumer much more agency or power in determining how the brand develops since the creator takes their cues from them. As Ethel explains:

“A brand is not something that is instant, you have to see what people are looking at, what people are reading, what people are thinking. And then try to pull as many strands of that into the image, into your advertising image that you create.” (Ethel, Co-founder, National Jazz Festival, Jamaica)

Responding to the needs of consumers is a promising brand development strategy, particularly in small markets where there are fewer potential patrons. Justin echoes these sentiments as he explains that this strategy is a key factor in the success of his brand:

“I think a lot of people are just concerned about the whole element of making money and calling that George!⁵⁷ Now I’m not saying you not supposed to be thinking about making money, but I think your primary objective is making sure that your brand is able to build. And with that in mind your patrons will come first. People always come first.” (Justin, Founder, Regional entertainment company)

This client-centric approach is not driven by systematic data collection but on a tacit understanding based on observation and the cultural producers’ expertise. Allowing patrons and their needs to carve out the direction that a brand should follow has proven to be a positive and successful brand strategy for small and medium enterprises globally (Business

⁵⁷ The idiom ‘call that George’ usually means “let that be the end of it”.

Development Bank of Canada, 2015), particularly because it ensures that patrons remain invested and connected to the cultural product, a key element in a sector built around symbolic goods (Cundari, 2015).

Of course the three approaches discussed above (innovation, strategic growth and client-centric) are not absolute and cultural producers have the liberty to shift between them depending on the needs of their brand, the stage of brand development and the unique idiosyncrasies of their environment at any given time.

6.2.2 Brand-building across creative sectors

In examining the role of brand, one of the aims of this thesis was to discover whether this role varied dependent on the creative sector. The premise for this question is the assumption that given that different cultural sectors have unique challenges that create a distinct environment, then it is possible that brand adapts to the specific needs of that sector. In speaking with cultural producers across the fashion, music, festival and public sectors, the responses were varied regarding whether brand operated in a homogenous fashion.

Of all the sectors, the music sector was one in which brand development showed a decidedly unique trajectory that has evolved to suit the unique way that Caribbean markets work. In talking with Paul of VP Records,⁵⁸ he revealed that across the regional music sector, brand can only be built off of the strength of a successful portfolio. When asked to describe how a brand evolves, he explained:

“I thought about that question in terms of the brands or different artists, but often time what we’ve dealt with are songs. You know, a song becomes a hit, and that’s what people start to know, and then if you can follow that up then you start to

⁵⁸ VP records is based in New York and is the largest global record label for Caribbean music.

have an artist. You know, ‘It wasn’t me’ was the song, then ‘Mr Boombastic’, then that became the story, you know, that they were able to follow that up. Now people know who Shaggy⁵⁹ is.” (Paul, Marketing Executive, VP Records)

In the Caribbean music industry, an artist’s musical portfolio crafts the story and public perception surrounding the artist. After success has been achieved, music companies are then ready to invest the time and resources into building upon this story and shaping the artist’s brand. The lack of interest to invest in artists before they have proven that they can make money can again be traced back to the structure of the local market. As money is made primarily through live performances, artists need to prove that they can attract live audiences before they can secure industry investment and begin outlining a brand strategy.

The practise of putting brand on the side-lines until after commercial success has been attained, rests not only with industry executives, but with the artist as well. As Gerald explains:

“I think only when an artist breaks through from like a regional or a local environment, where they are now international like a Sean Paul⁶⁰, then they can start thinking about – alright we need to make an album and we need to make hits. And I think that’s a little different from the artists who are mainstream, where they would take time, take a year to make an album. We’re not so much into making albums, we’re just producing music.” (Gerald, Founder and Director, Jamaican Music Website)

Artists working within the framework of the regional music market usually do not have the luxury of concentrating on brand. In an industry characterised by competitiveness and a fast

⁵⁹ Shaggy is one of the Caribbean’s most popular contemporary artists. To date he has topped international charts across the world, including the US, UK, Australia.

⁶⁰ Sean Paul is a popular Grammy award-winning dancehall artist from Jamaica.

turn over, where multiple riddims⁶¹ are introduced every week (Power and Hallencreutz, 2002), artists must focus on quick production so that they can remain current, book live performances and hopefully attract the attention of labels. This is not to say that the artist does not have an idea of what their brand could be from the onset, but rather that from the perspective of those involved in the more commercial side of the industry, brand is decidedly a later-stage development.

Apart from music, it was also suggested that some sectors have a 'natural' brand. Here the role of the cultural producer in branding a product can sometimes become obsolete, as the product is inherently branded. As Ethel explains:

“...Because our theatre is about us, it is about life in Trinidad, it is about life in Jamaica, you know the plays that are written, these things are about life. So again, there's a kind of natural brand, you know, we're not trying to be European theatre, we're not trying to be American theatre. Our plays and theatrical productions are about us. So if you come to a Jamaican play, you hear Jamaican people on the stage talking about life in Jamaica. If you come to a play in Trinidad you gonna hear Trinidadian accents talking about life in Trinidad, am I right? So there's a natural automatic brand, there's the language, there's the accents. Our accents brand us automatically. Um, and how we dress onstage, you know what kind of furniture is up there, what kind of stage setting is there. That's natural! But there is no intention to sell any of that overseas. So there's no need to put red, green and gold on it, there's no need to put anything specific on it because we're not trying to sell it overseas.” (Ethel, Co-founder, National Jazz Festival, Jamaica)

⁶¹ The 'riddim' method, popularised by Jamaican reggae and dancehall, describes the trend where producers create a singular melodic track on which numerous musical artists then add their voices. The artists are allowed to put their own spin on their version of the track and thus they compete to get on a riddim, and then to have the most popular song on that riddim.

In sectors like theatre where the cultural product is intended to be a mirror or capsule of cultural identity, there is an intrinsic brand, since what is presented is inherently Caribbean. While this natural brand will understandably be stronger and more visible in some creative sectors as opposed to others, the presence and value of the natural brand in the creative economy is undeniable. Furthermore, the idea of the ‘natural brand’ raises questions around the various implications of forcibly branding and repackaging culture, specifically for the purpose of global commerce.

Interestingly, in contrast to the above, some interviewees claimed that brand works the same irrespective of the cultural sector. This is not surprising given that there is a great deal of permeability in the boundaries between creative sectors, especially in economies like the Caribbean’s where some sectors, such as music and festivals are inextricably linked. This, in addition to the fact that there is a small network of cultural producers who are often involved in multiple creative industries, makes it easy to see why they may not notice discernible differences in the way brand works across the sectors. Ethel who runs a national Jazz festival says that from her perspective the principles for branding culture remain the same regardless of the sector since culture is all the same. She clarifies:

“It doesn’t have a difference really you know. Culture has to do with how people live, what they do, what they eat, how they dress, how they worship, how they talk, how they walk. So if your cultural product is dance, and you want to sell your dance show or your dance music to people outside of your country, outside of your immediate circle, you have to understand those people. What is their outlook on dance? What is it they like? What is it that you hear them talking? What is it that they listen to? And you have to try and match your thing to them.” (Ethel, Co-founder, National Jazz Festival, Jamaica)

In talking with Ethel it became clear that for her branding was about connecting with the consumer and figuring out what it is they wanted. In her opinion, this strategy could be applied to any cultural product, regardless of the idiosyncrasies of the particular sector. Nicholas, an executive member of a national fashion stakeholder organisation agreed, explaining that all cultural products are consumed in an intimate way:

“In some respects fashion is a fairly intimate, you know, it’s intimate in terms of its interaction with the consumer. And especially when you’re dealing with fashion designers they tend to be intimate about what they designing and they sort of expect that same relationship with whoever it is is consuming whatever it is they’re producing...I think that any creative product tends to have a more, what you want to call it, a higher value for that intimacy than other industries. So for example, manufacturing any creative product or cultural product has a certain intrinsic value to the person producing it, having them take whatever is influencing them in producing that one creative product and then offering that to the world. So it’s not you know a high-chair that you offering to the world because it’s very efficient or you’re solving problems in a very different way, which is what products attempt to do. I think cultural and creative products in general tend to have a more, or tend to pursue a more intimate relationship with the consumer.” (Nicholas, Executive, Fashion Association of Trinidad and Tobago)

The idea that cultural products have an intimate relationship with consumers that cannot be achieved in any other industry has been previously explored in Chapter Three’s discussion around symbolic goods. Thus, it can be argued that this intimacy is drawn from the symbolic connection that is present in all cultural exchanges, regardless of the sector.

Interestingly, building on the idea that there is no difference in the way in which brand works across cultural sectors, some interviewees went even further and claimed that the relationship

between brand and production remains unchanged, irrespective of whether or not a cultural product is involved. As Denise, an executive at the Jamaica Association of Composers, Authors and Publishers Limited (JACAP) explained “Branding is branding. For example you have Chronixx,⁶² you would market him the same way you would market a product. So for me there should be no difference”. It is noteworthy that the increased value of a cultural product, given its symbolic nature and more intimate relationship with consumers, did not seem to bare any significance for some cultural producers. Another interviewee, expressed a similar sentiment, offering this explanation as to why branding remains unchanged across industries saying:

“It’s the same across the board for one major reason, because the people think alike in all industries. It’s a mentality issue. It’s definitely a mentality issue. The same thing that will plague you in music is the same thing that will plague you in a roti shop,⁶³ it’s the same thing that will plague you in an airline [company].”
(Jordan, Founder and Director, National fashion show, Trinidad and Tobago)

The argument here is that there is a lack of distinction in the way brand is used across the creative sectors because regional cultural producers and consumers engage with all products in the same way. Of course, as discussed earlier, everyone’s perceptions of brand is personal and valid, however, this argument fails to acknowledge the symbolic value of cultural products and the subsequent intangible assets that they provide to consumers. The fact that the symbolic value of creative goods can be overlooked by those who are actively involved in the sector, underscores the fact that creative goods are often undervalued on the local market.

⁶² Chronixx is a Jamaican reggae artist who has topped the Billboard Reggae Chart and been nominated for numerous local and international awards.

⁶³ The roti shop is an important space in Caribbean culture, as it is where members of the community meet to socialise, as well as discuss and debate current events.

In conclusion, this discussion on the construction of brand demonstrates that regional cultural producers use three core approaches, relying on innovation, strategy and the directives of their clients. It also illustrates that in some sectors, like music, brand building has been adapted to suit the unique way in which the regional industry works. The discussion also highlights the polarising views of cultural producers with some arguing that brand building works uniquely in the creative sectors, and others believing that it is the same as traditional commercial sectors.

6.3 Brand in practice

6.3.1 Brand as protection: A defensive approach

This section of the chapter looks at some of the distinct ways in which brand is used across the Caribbean's creative economy. Generally speaking, when brand is discussed, it usually from a perspective where brand is seen as a mechanism for growth or as a tool which can further either commercial or sociocultural aims. However throughout this research, it became apparent that within the Caribbean's creative sectors, brand also had an alternative, critical function – it was a means of protection. The need for protection has been addressed by UNESCO in relation to what it terms 'safeguarding', which refers to implementing measures which can further the "identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education, as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such heritage" (UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2003, p.3).⁶⁴ It appears that the region has adopted a defensive position whereby brand has become a way to mark and label cultural outputs, so as to ensure that they cannot be pilfered by foreign entities.

⁶⁴ Only nine (9) CARICOM member states are signatories to this convention.

This defensive approach must be properly contextualised to be understood. For centuries the Caribbean's creative outputs have been copied, reproduced and exported around the globe, often with little or none of the proceeds returning to the islands. Take for example the steel pan, the national instrument of Trinidad and Tobago and the only acoustic musical instrument invented in the 20th century. To date, the government has had to challenge several international claimants over the patenting of the instrument with the most prominent case involving a 2002 patent application where the applicant was believed to have replicated the steelpan with the notes arranged in the opposite order. After the government of Trinidad and Tobago issued an inter-partes re-examination request, the United States Patent and Trademark Office eventually revoked the patent (Government Information Services Limited, 2011). However, the battle for ownership and distribution rights still continues with the development of the new electronic versions of the steelpan, which raises questions around who can rightfully lay claim to a local cultural artefact after it has been modernised.

Apart from the above, there have been numerous instances where the islands have struggled to hold on to their cultural artefacts. As Joseph, a public servant, simply stated “there are persons who are not Jamaicans who want to capitalise on Jamaica, ‘To get a piece of the rock’ as we say it”. Another interviewee recalled the case a controversial Volkswagen Super Bowl advertisement⁶⁵ which sparked global criticism over its racialized undertones, and which interestingly, the Jamaican government ultimately endorsed, seemingly appreciative of the free publicity. As Elizabeth explained:

“I think most of us are concerned that we are not benefitting from all of this commercialisation. Not directly anyway. Our brand is still out there and it keeps our brand in the international sphere but....How do I feel about that? Well, it's

⁶⁵ The 2013 advertisement is built around the trope that all Caribbean people are relaxed, and depicts an American caucasian male using a Jamaican accent to convince his colleagues that they should ignore the stressful demands of the corporate workspace.

unfortunate sometimes that our own people don't seize those opportunities. You know, that's my concern. That more of us are not capitalising on our own culture, that it's usually people who live outside, or who are not directly connected to the culture but who love the culture and who see the potential for it." (Elizabeth, Executive Director, Cultural Heritage Organisation, Jamaica)

This issue of protection has become even more pressing in an era where globalisation and information sharing are fuelled by constantly updated technological innovations and the ease of movement of people and products. In light of these global flows, Caribbean cultural products can be accessed almost anywhere across the globe, especially given that the Caribbean diaspora has consistently ensured that Caribbean culture has its place on the international stage. Through mega-events such as the Notting Hill Carnival in London, Caribana in Toronto and the Labour Day Parade in New York, Caribbean music, festivals and designs have all been showcased around the globe. However, despite their evident successes, the island nations out of which they have emerged do not reap any rewards. As Justin explains:

"It is actually like we are being raped of one of our national resources per se...They're using our Carnival and they're using our Soca and so forth, but they're not tying back to home, where really and truly this is something we created. It is almost like the steel pan⁶⁶ in a sense, you know... I think it's just a protection of what is ours...So I think it's a protection of what is, or not even a protection because I don't really feel like protecting it per se, more like ensuring people understand that it's Caribbean." (Justin, Founder, Regional entertainment company)

⁶⁶ The interviewee is referring to the steel pan's embattled history with intellectual property.

The basic premise is that brand has the power to ensure that something is marked as belonging to the Caribbean, and that that brand can be the platform whereby some of benefits accrued by Caribbean cultural products on the international market may be redirected to their home nations. It is hoped that if the international public is made aware of the origin of these cultural events, then the desire for an authentic experience or authentic cultural products can be channelled into national and regional revenue streams.

This need for protection has become part of the driver for brand, and it became part of the impetus behind the aforementioned 'Brand Jamaica' campaign. This campaign, (arguably the most prolific nation branding campaign in the region) is run by the Jamaica's Tourism Board (JTB) and supported by other relevant agencies such as the Jamaica Intellectual Property Organisation (JIPO), Jamaica Promotions Corporation (JAMPRO) and Jamaica National Export Strategy (NES). In 2013 the JTB produced a brand and campaign style guide⁶⁷ which dictates the way in which the brand should be visually represented, focusing on guidelines regarding the use of the brandmark, typography campaign texture, photography style etc. While the publication does touch on the brand's identity and personality, it is evident that the document is driven by the tourism industry's agenda. However, in talking with Anthony, an attorney instrumental in the development of the campaign, he explains that the campaign is much broader than tourism and has been a means of allowing "Brand Jamaica and all of its various aspects and components [to be] managed in a centralised but nevertheless interdisciplinary, multi-agency manner, so that the brand can hopefully be confidently protected".

Recently, Jamaica also spearheaded the initiative to trademark their country's name so as to prevent the island's name being used to promote goods which do not originate there. The government also developed a report for the WIPO Standing Committee on the Law of

⁶⁷ See Appendix J for excerpts from the JTB's brand and campaign style guide.

Trademarks Industrial Designs and Geographical Indications (SCT), in which it claims that “despite the odds and centuries of exploitation, the Jamaica brand is one of the strongest and most well-known nation brands internationally and therefore a valuable national asset, central and integral to the national sustainable development of Jamaica” (JIPO, no year, p.2). It also asserts that “States have the right and responsibility to halt misappropriation and unauthorized exploitation, passing off, likelihood of association and/or confusion, dilution, unfair competition in respect of their country name and nation brand.”(JIPO, no year, p. 38). Measures such as these have become integral in today’s technology-driven world, where the ease of reproduction, circulation and distribution makes duplication and misrepresentation easy. As such, brand represents an opportunity to not only ensure against intellectual property theft but also an avenue through which to reclaim ownership over the region.

However, there are those who claim that this drive to protect national cultural products is hindering cultural development. Kwame an artist and head of a national music organisation addressed the issue saying:

“The only problem is that there is calypso in so many different spaces in the world and we separated. We isolated. Trinidad and Tobago feel calypso⁶⁸ is we thing and you know, and we hold on like this [depicts gripping motion]. I mean, if they hear a Costa Rican singing – well what wrong with he? He trying to sing calypso! There must be an understanding that yes, this music has found root in all these different localities. And our mission, if we are the home of, the land of calypso, our mission must be to establish ourselves as the magnet, or the home base where all these come if they want to connect, if they want to talk about calypso, or relate to the music.” (Kwame, Calypsonian and Executive, Trinbago Unified Calypsonian’s Organisation)

⁶⁸ Calypso is “a style of Afro-Caribbean music that originated in Trinidad and Tobago from African and European roots. The roots of the genre lay in the arrival of enslaved Africans, who, not being allowed to speak to each other, communicated through song.” (Trinbago Unified Calypsonians Organisation, 2016).

In Kwame's appraisal, the struggle to hold on to calypso and brand it as Trinbagonian has only served to deter expansion and stifle growth. This argument, steeped in anti-brand rhetoric, sheds light on the fact that branding implies a sense of ownership, and while some cultural products are more easily 'owned', in this particular case it is not beneficial to try to control or dictate who has the right to perform indigenous music.

The move against cultural appropriation and the need to maintain ownership lies deep, particularly in societies like the Caribbean which have had contentious imperialist histories. In fact, as one writer argued "if the identity tax were not involuntary and automatic, cultural groups might choose to forego the benefits of potential recognition in favour of protection against appropriation" (Scafidi, 2005, p.11). This may well be the case in the Caribbean where the public constantly rejects re-interpretations of local art forms when produced by foreigners. However, as it is impossible to control the distribution and consumption of local culture within the current global flows, the Caribbean may be fighting a losing battle and as such it may need to reconsider its stance on trying to own its culture, through brand or any other avenues.

6.3.2 The role of the 'metabrand' and collaborative frameworks

In trying to understand the way brands work within the context of the Caribbean, it became clear that there was a larger structure in place, what this thesis shall refer to as the 'metabrand'. The metabrand represents the massive, independent, unowned brands which dominate the creative economy, the likes of reggae, soca or carnival. The writer has chosen not to use the term 'parent brand', as the term and the commercial brand architecture out of which it is borne, is not particularly applicable within the context of the symbolic economy.⁶⁹ According

⁶⁹ Similarly, while there is literature around related terms such as the 'superbrand' and the 'megabrand', the writer felt they did not fit the context being explored here as they both refer to commercial retail giants.

to the Oxford English Dictionary (2016), the prefix ‘meta’ can be used to denote “a higher level”, and thus the term metabrand has been created to refer the mammoth cultural brands which dominate the region. Adopting this alternative terminology, allows the thesis to address the distinct idiosyncrasies of the regional creative economy without the burden of working around the more commerce-driven concepts used in industry.

The concept of the metabrand came to light during an interview with Paul, an American and music label executive who had a unique perspective, in that he was able to view the creative economy as a foreigner, without the emotional baggage which many nationals may carry. When asked about the brands which his artists cultivate, he gave this insight:

“Well, you know, part of the structure when you’re talking about Trinidad is the idea of Carnival. In my mind, it’s the whole idea of the tradition – the form of it, as being how things are built. So you start with that form and then how you plug in each year or the different artists, is sort of built around that. So the brand is not necessarily the artist, who’s a carnival artist – the brand is carnival, and the artist is a part of that overall brand. Because when we go out and we’re selling Bunji⁷⁰ or whoever, the genre and where they are coming from, that’s the bigger brand I think.” (Paul, Marketing Executive, VP Records)

The idea that an artist’s brand cannot be untethered from the cultural event or cultural context out of which it was born underscores the critical role of the metabrand. Introducing the concept of the metabrand creates an opportunity to develop a fresh framework within which the creative economy can be explored. The presence of these large unowned metabrands, such as carnival, reggae or soca, alters the structure of the industry and changes the way in which the networks and linkages between cultural sectors, cultural events and cultural producers can be interpreted.

⁷⁰ Bunji Garlin is one of the Caribbean’s premier Soca artists having won the International Soca Monarch competition numerous times, as well as a Soul Train Award in 2013 for Best International Performance.

Using the template set out above, the Caribbean creative economy can be said to be home to multiple metabrands, which again adds to the complexity of the local market. These multiple metabrands as expected, vary in strength, as well as regional and international prominence. One interviewee, Ethel, highlighted this when she explained the strength of the Reggae metabrand:

“You know a jazz brand is slightly different from a reggae brand, because a reggae brand comes ready-made with the Rastafarian colours, the dreadlocks hairstyle, the music, and the image of Bob Marley. So when you’re doing reggae festivals or dancehall and stuff, you already have a ready-made image, and the government of Jamaica has utilised that image as well, in pretty much everything that it does to sell Jamaica. So the Jazz image is harder to sell because there is no consciousness outside of Jamaica of Jamaica being a jazz country, of jazz being a part of our image in this time.” (Ethel, Co-founder, National Jazz Festival, Jamaica)

Even a cursory comparative analysis shows that some of the region’s metabrands like reggae are much more powerful and thus enjoy greater brand awareness than others due in large part to their history and the pervasiveness of the myths that surround them. This means that as Ethel pointed out, dependant on the sector, some cultural producers have a stronger foundation upon which to build their individual brands.

Of course, the strength of the brand also means that it is more difficult for cultural work to be assessed solely on its own merit, separate and apart from the metabrand. Indeed it is often the case that music artists attest to the fact that they cannot break out of the mould of being ‘a carnival artist’ or a ‘soca artist’. Similarly, within the fashion industry, the practise of labelling designs as ‘Caribbean’ is something that is now being challenged by industry professionals since it is considered to be limiting (discussed further in section 7.2). However, regardless of

whether its impact is interpreted in a positive or negative light, the importance of the metabrand in the regional creative economy must be acknowledged.

Alongside this reliance on the metabrand, many creative sectors strategically use the successes of other national sectors to help fuel their own. As illustrated in Table 3 (Chapter Five), regional ministerial portfolios usually combine the creative industries with sectors such as Sport, Youth, Tourism, Entertainment etc. This institutional framework provides the infrastructure for the cross-ministerial relationships where a strong national sector can bolster a weaker one. While sports and culture are a common pairing across the globe, what is distinct about this relationship in the Caribbean is the depth of reliance that the creative economy has on sport.

The relationship between sport and culture has long been the subject of research and debate (Jarvie, 2006) and across the Caribbean sport is an essential important part of the cultural landscape, with the two sectors constantly intertwined for a variety of reasons. Firstly, sport is a critical part of the Caribbean lifestyle and like most other cultural events it has a theatrical element which excites and deeply engages those involved. When played, particularly on an international level, it also engenders feelings of patriotism, and thus also naturally encourages people to celebrate the unique cultural attributes of their nation. Additionally, on a regional level, as Joseph, one public sector executive succinctly and sarcastically exclaimed “the only united thing we see is West Indies cricket”. Indeed the popularity of cricket and the ability of the West Indies team to unite Caribbean citizens through a common goal creates a sense of community and creates a space within which the region can celebrate its unique and shared culture. Given that the Caribbean has come into the limelight of the sporting world owing to the dominance of sportsmen like Usain Bolt, Ato Boldon and Shelly-Ann Fraser in the field of athletics, sport has created a gateway for the Caribbean to gain access to an international stage. To this end, wherever sportsmen are performing, national agencies always ensure that

where possible, elements of cultural heritage or significance are prominently showcased, thus taking advantage of the opportunity to access a global audience.

In a similar way, culture and the creative industries also have a close relationship with tourism, with some interviewees even characterising the two as a 'sister industries'. This relationship is founded on the principal that culture serves as one of the pull factors which tourism agencies use to attract the attention of potential visitors. In fact heritage tourism, with all its challenges, is becoming a core part of the regional economy (Scher, 2011; Jordan, 2013; Jordan and Joliffe, 2013). Avril a representative of the Caribbean Tourism Organisation offered this take on the intimacy between the two sectors:

"I think it's a critical relationship, it's a relationship that's closely entwined. Because if you think about it, culture is the reason why many people travel. You know, we have far more aware tourists now. You know, tourists have so many different tools to expose them to destinations. So you might see that even today's generation, they'll still talk about for example Bob Marley and sing his songs etc., even though he has not been around for a number of decades and his children have a lesser profile. So culture has a massive impact on tourism. Culture also helps destinations to create an identity. You know, people think of you know Trinidad and steel pan music, you know, they think of Jamaica and reggae. So culture has a massive impact on tourism and also can help to reposition and strengthen the brand of a destination." (Avril, Marketing Executive, CTO)

The relationship between tourism and the creative industries is a long-standing one, which comes with many benefits. For starters, tourism industries are usually well-funded, especially in the Caribbean where tourists and foreign exchange are highly courted. Furthermore, the tourism sector is usually one of the oldest long-standing sectors, whose ministries are not

under threat of re-structuring after every government election. This history and stability comes with its own advantages. As Halcyon explains:

“There is also great value to be had from tourism for entertainment, and for entertainment from tourism. So there’s that linkage and those cross-sectoral things that need to happen in that regard....And one of the interesting things is if you look across the world where you actually have film commissions that are rooted in tourism industries – those film commissions tend to do much better than those that are standalone, for the simple reason that tourism ministries have been better able to market the destination a lot better. They have a much longer time and history of marketing the destination. It’s interesting, I mean it’s something to watch because entertainment is not always with the tourism ministry here in Jamaica either, it’s a political choice, so it can change and it probably will change.”

(Halcyon, Entertainment Executive, Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment, Jamaica)

It is evident that creative sectors which have access to the funding and networks that national tourism agencies can offer, have access to a greater number of gateways through which they can offer their cultural products, as well larger audiences of potential consumers.

Even within the creative economy itself this strategy of piggybacking on stronger sectors can prove beneficial, as some sectors such as music, festivals and film have a much stronger global presence and thus can be used to bolster their weaker counterparts. Lyn, explains the benefits of this approach, saying:

“We need to develop the Caribbean brand as a whole, and I think that is how we would [succeed], because we are small in these islands. So if a Machel Montano

wears you know nothing but Anthony Reid,⁷¹ all of those things come together.

And I think that helps us a lot. So when he goes and wins an award at BET, and he's wearing [Anthony], all of those things come together...We can't do it separately, and that is the biggest problem with our creative arts industries..."

(Lyn, Editor and Publisher, Caribbean fashion magazine)

If artists and cultural producers created stronger cross-sectoral networks, and used their platforms as a means through which to share the work of other national and regional artists in related creative sectors, the entire creative economy would grow in strength. In the same way that a creative economy can be built on the backs of tourism and sport, so too can weaker creative sectors profit off of the successes of the stronger sectors. In this way the individual strengths of national and regional sectors can be used to propel the region forward and further both the development and distribution of national and regional cultural brands.

In conclusion, this chapter's analysis of brand in practise shows that brand has extended past its usual commercial functions and has become a mechanism for safeguarding or protecting the region's creative economy and the interests of its cultural producers. The discussion also illustrates the unique role of the metabrand in organising the regional creative economy and cultural production. Finally, the analysis above also indicates that cross-sectoral collaboration plays a critical role in the development of the Caribbean's creative economy. Having now explored the way in which brand is understood, constructed and used by industry stakeholders, the following section proceeds to address this thesis's second research question.

⁷¹ Machel Montano is the Caribbean's most prolific Soca performer having dominated both the local and diaspora festival circuits for over two decades. Anthony Reid is a well-known menswear designer.

RQ 2: How does brand influence the dynamics of the Caribbean creative economy?

6.4 Brand and Creativity

6.4.1 Creativity in the Caribbean framework

As the research question above illustrates, part of this thesis' aim was understanding how brand influences the workings of the creative economy, and one of the themes that arose was creativity. According to UNCTAD, creativity can be defined as “the process by which ideas are generated, connected and transformed into things that are valued” (UNCTAD 2008, p.10). Creativity has always featured prominently in the Caribbean narrative and the region has long been touted as a hub of creative energy. As is often the case for developing nations, creativity is often glamorised and framed as a panacea in the face of developmental challenges. As Norman Girvan, one of the Caribbean's most esteemed economists explained “in the Caribbean creation is inextricably linked with survival. For us to survive is to create” (Girvan, 2000).

The idea that creativity would be one of the defining forces which will help propel the region's developmental goals, has been repeated and ingrained in the region's collective memory through national and regional rhetoric,⁷² national reports and school curricula.⁷³ The recent push to diversify the region's economy has also pushed creativity and the creative industries which it fuels to the forefront (ECLAC, 2012). However, while the creative industries have been the subject of an increasing amount of regional research, creativity and its role in this sector has not. Understanding creativity within the Caribbean context is an extensive task which this research will not undertake, however, it will attempt to examine the

⁷² For example, a July 2015 address by CARICOM secretary-general ambassador Irwin La Rocque called for “unleashing the dynamism and creativity which have been the hallmark of our region and using that distinctive Caribbean vibrancy to build our society on our own terms” (CARICOM, 2015).

⁷³ See both Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica's revised education curricula which now include visual and performing arts; and drama, language arts and music respectively.

points at which creativity and brand intersect, as seen from the perspectives of cultural producers.

Once steeped in mysticism and divine intervention, discourse and definitions surrounding creativity have evolved greatly (Kaufmann, 2009). In his book *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002) Richard Florida explored the concept of creativity explaining that it has become: “the most highly prized commodity in our economy – and yet it is not a “commodity”. Creativity comes from people. And while people can be hired and fired, their creative capacity cannot be bought and sold or turned on and off at will” (Florida, 2002, pp. 5). However, others have opposed this view, arguing that creativity should not necessarily be thought of as this intangible ‘thing’ but rather as a process. In his article ‘Rethinking creativity’ social psychologist Brady Wagoner suggests we move past the idea of creativity being something that is produced by individuals and rather view it “as a complex ongoing process, oriented to an open future, in which social others and cultural tools directly participate in and are constitutive of.” (Wagoner, p.125). This more expansive definition allows the researcher to approach creativity not just as a product of individual production but also as a result of the sociocultural field and the domain⁷⁴ within which the cultural product or service exists.

Understanding creativity in its complexity, as it exists within the Caribbean, requires a contextual approach and must allow for taking some critical factors about the localised domain into consideration. To begin, it must be clarified that while creativity is celebrated in the region, it is not always nurtured. As one entrepreneur explained:

“We have a lot of talented creative people in the Caribbean, just like anywhere else on the planet. However, I’ve spent most of my adult life in the United States and I

⁷⁴ Csikszentmihalyi’s sociocultural model of creativity posits that creativity has three main components: the person, the field (a group of experts/intermediaries who determine if the product is novel) and the domain (the space within which the product is distributed). While these roles constantly evolve in light of cultural, social and technological advances, each of the components play an equal role in the creative process (Sawyer, R. 2006; McIntyre, P. 2008).

can tell you this, if you are born with a talent and it was not nurtured then all you had was a talent. But if you're born with a talent and then your environment empowers that or helps you to nurture it, then the world can then share in that talent that you were born with. In the Caribbean however, we're challenged, the folks with that talent that don't have the platform to bring that talent to the forefront, or the nurturing aspect, or the structured environment that can take you from someone with talent to someone that's a talented person that's a superstar, that can also make it financially because of that talent." (Jordan, Founder and Director, National fashion show, Trinidad and Tobago)

The Caribbean framework is not always conducive to fostering creativity and of course this ability to nurture creative potential varies from island to island. As designers Candice and Crystal explain:

"It's only because Trinidad is bigger than most of the islands, that we have people getting into this creative side. I think a lot of smaller islands are still stuck, not to say stuck, but still into their old school, so they're still about just making money 9 to 5, 8 to 4. So a lot of people are trying harder to break loose. Even those who break loose come to Trinidad or go to Jamaica and get creative there...because we have that financial stability more than the islands, we have that drive to 'come up'." (Candice and Crystal, Fashion designers, Trinidad)

The reason why some societies foster creativity more than others cannot of course be attributed to one singular cause. From an industrial standpoint, the political landscape and the national development strategy determine how much institutional support is given to the creative industries. In many cases if a nation has to tackle pressing national issues such as poverty, crime or declining tourism then it is reflected in the allocation of national funds, and often the creative sector is overlooked. Also, as aforementioned, in terms of the Caribbean's developmental priorities, only five (5) CARICOM members have a completed national

cultural policy. This lack of legislature is indicative of governmental apathy towards investing in creative endeavours, despite the penchant for professing the importance of creativity.

Creativity is also stymied by the financial unviability of creative work. From a commercial perspective, many cultural producers have to consider the size of the market when determining if they can make a living off of cultural production. In many of the smaller islands, there is simply not enough opportunity to generate a sustainable income from your creative product and as such citizens are not willing to invest the time and energy into creative production. On the other hand, in the stronger economies where there are alternative avenues for employment, the creative spirit is also tempered by the appeal of traditional jobs which can be substantially more lucrative. In her interview, Shirley, a government official for the island of Tobago touched on the issue of financial motivation and its pivotal role in the creative arts:

“When you look at even the sports with Jamaica, these guys know for a fact, the only way we could get out of the ghetto is either we run, we learn to throw a javelin, we learn to throw a discus, we look pretty and go up for Miss Universe and win, or either we sing some good reggae songs to hit you, or hit some good dancehall. Otherwise we staying where we is. So here what, the job is to make it happen for us. And they understand that. [In Trinidad] We know that performing arts and all these things come second to us, it is not our priority. All of us have a job while we do it. We all have a government job. I’m a performer yes, but when the day comes I get up in the morning and go to work. Totally different behavioural pattern. You understand?” (Shirley, Executive – Culture Division, Tobago House of Assembly)

It is evident that the economic climate shapes creativity and so in spaces where there are fewer employment opportunities, creativity is painted as a pathway to economic stability.

Conversely, in the more affluent islands with booming national sectors, there is the risk that creativity will remain a low-end priority because it simply does not pay as much as traditional jobs.

Consequently creativity remains a complex issue, particularly when it is subject to analysis within a specific geographic framework, such as the Caribbean. While the region respects and glamorises creativity, it is not necessarily encouraged. Furthermore, its lucrativeness is consistently undermined by the informal industry structures which prevent creators from accessing the money that their creativity generates. Building on this the following sections explores the intersection between creativity and brand, as experienced or witnessed from the unique perspectives of the region's cultural producers.

6.4.2 Brand expectations and creative production

One of the pressing issues that this thesis wanted to explore was how brand influences creative production, specifically within the Caribbean context. When asked whether brand influences creative production one interviewee chuckled and responded “In other words which comes first – the chicken or the egg?” Certainly one can understand that it may be difficult for creators to step away from the creative process and be able to objectively identify how brand has shaped their work. Fortunately many of the cultural producers interviewed were very self-aware and through critical reflexive analysis were able to identify the ways in which they felt brand continues to affect their creative endeavours.

One issue that was repeatedly raised and warrants further analysis is the role of brand expectations in creative production. The expectations that individuals associate with a brand are a composite of a number of brand attributes such as the brand promise, brand identity, brand image and brand personality. The question then is what do people expect from the

Caribbean and its cultural brands? When this question was addressed to the editor of the region's top lifestyle magazine she responded:

“I actually don't think they expect much. While I lived away I realised that the expectations that people have coming to the Caribbean wasn't much. They didn't think that we did have a sophisticated lifestyle. They thought that everyone here worked in a hotel and that we lived a very basic lifestyle.” (Isla, Editor-in-Chief. Regional lifestyle magazine)

Her opinion is not an uncommon one, as overly-simplistic views of the Caribbean and Caribbean lifestyle are often encountered. These narrow interpretations of the Caribbean have a direct effect on cultural production as they shape public perception around what the region should or rather is capable of producing.

In line with this argument, many of the interviewees expressed that their creative outputs are often limited by what their consumers expect from their brands, as Caribbean brands. As two fashion designers explained:

“I think people don't expect fashion to come out of the Caribbean. They [fashion designers] underestimate themselves. Because the world has that opinion that Caribbean is not for fashion, Caribbean fashion designers don't think that they are for an international base fashion. Like only now you seeing these smaller designers hit the bigger runways...”

These entrenched limitations which are built around the region eventually trickle down and shape the designer's creative outputs. The founders of Zion⁷⁵ Clothing also expanded on this saying that in their lived experience as fashion designers, they felt that the region has been pigeonholed:

⁷⁵ Brand's name replaced with a pseudonym.

“Even when we went to New York we were still a little bit shy, we still kept our Caribbean aesthetic. We didn’t do anything drastically different because we were going to New York, which I think a lot of international designers kind of expect...Because the Caribbean does not have its place in the fashion worldwide yet, we are only expected for one thing. Whereas you can look at Michael Kors, or Marc Jacobs⁷⁶ and they can do ANYTHING they want, because they are just who they are. The Caribbean is not at that standard yet to do anything we want.”

(Candice and Crystal, Fashion designers, Trinidad)

They went on to further clarify that when they presented a collection at New York fashion week they were careful not to present work that was too far removed from what they were expected to deliver. Thus, it would appear that while some creators may be willing to take risks with their brand in the local context, when they are invited to present a brand on an international platform they remain cognisant of the expectations of the international consumer and they feel somewhat obliged not to disappoint.

However, while brand expectations do influence and in some cases limit creative expression in cultural production, the larger question remains – are these limitations self-imposed and are Caribbean cultural producers imprisoned in a cage of their own making? To contextualise this question, one must remember that most Caribbean nations are very young⁷⁷ and as such they are still trying to concretise their national identities. In developing these identities, the various ways in which the Caribbean is represented in the minds of non-nationals have played a role in moulding the region’s conceptualisation of itself.

However the Caribbean has also played a large role in shaping the image which the world now has of the region. As previously discussed, tourism and culture are intricately linked across the region, and as such various national and regional campaigns have presented brand promises

⁷⁶ Michael Kors and Marc Jacobs are designers of eponymous luxury fashion brands.

⁷⁷ Both Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica only celebrated 50 years of independence in 2012.

which affect the way the region is perceived. While in recent years national tourism organisations have adopted new marketing strategies and ventured into areas such as heritage and eco-tourism, the Caribbean's traditional marketing approach has always been the default 'sun, sea and sand' tactic (Cameron and Gatewood, 2008). With the focus on these traditional 'pull factors', while culture was incorporated it was not always at the forefront. Furthermore, the type of cultural activities that were represented were curated so as to maximise commercial potential since tourism remains the primary source of foreign exchange and a key contributor to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for most nations,⁷⁸ particularly those without natural resources. In light of these considerations, the Caribbean and its culture is sometimes presented in a stereotypical and traditional manner, which can be somewhat limiting for cultural producers. Lyn, spoke about the need to use tourism to remove these limitations for regional cultural producers saying:

"Tourism is a perfect vehicle for us to see more and more of our artists honed and developed through that industry. Whether its writers, poets, and we have some great poets and writers coming out of the Caribbean... We tend to buy what's very easy for us to get rid of because the tourist argument goes that the tourist just wants a 5 dollar souvenir to take home that just says St. Lucia, or Trinidad or Jamaica or whatever...So a lot of the arts, the theatre has died. Because they just can't survive beside the people eating fire, which is what they think the tourists want to see. But I don't quite believe that!" (Lyn, Editor and Publisher, Caribbean fashion magazine)

The idea that the region underestimates the tourist palate and as such needlessly limits its brand promise is disconcerting, particularly because as Lyn illustrates, it has a direct and significant impact on the region's cultural sectors. From the perspective of the Caribbean

⁷⁸ The World Travel and Tourism Council's (2015) economic impact report for the Caribbean estimates that in 2015 Travel and Tourism will represent 14.8% of the region's GDP amounting to US 53.4 billion dollars.

Tourism Organisation (CTO), it is imperative that there is cohesion between what tourism promises and what cultural producers deliver to the consumer. As one marketing executive explains:

“...We the marketers, we create the promise, it’s the people at home that deliver the promise. So it’s absolutely critical, that if there’s any type of regional brand initiative, that the communities particularly those in tourism, art, transportation, health, retail, understand what promise has been made to the visitor and their role in delivering on the promise.” (Avril, Marketing Executive, CTO)

It is evident that the tourism sector and the way it defines the Caribbean on the international market does have an impact on the type of creative products that Caribbean producers are coerced into manufacturing. By emphasising and thus stimulating demand for products which have a ‘touristy feel’, the region has been privileging certain types of culture over others and muffling creativity and cultural expression. As such, it is clear that the region’s cultural framework needs to evolve so that it ultimately encourages innovation and stimulates cultural development through creative production.

6.4.3 Creativity and strategic decision-making

This research has also shown that creativity is also significantly impacted by the brand strategies that cultural producers implement. With the Caribbean markets being small, cultural producers are often the sole owners of their business. As such, while the motivations for creating cultural pieces no doubt differ for each producer, being able to earn from their work remains a priority for all. Consequently, as business owners, cultural producers are often faced with the inevitable task of navigating the tension between their need for artistic expression and their commercial aims. This tension between business goals and creative ambitions is ever present in the Caribbean. Designer Analise explained:

“I remember when I was at London College of Fashion one of the first things they told us was 95% of what you do as a designer is going to be business, 5% is going to be designing...The ideas and the end product is fine, the key issues is marketing it at the right time, marketing it in the right space, to the right people, so that you get the most traction off of that so that our product becomes wanted. So that you’re in demand! The key issue is to always be relevant, always with presence and just have people – supply and demand.” (Annalise, Fashion Designer, Trinidad)

The interviewee also explains that her work as a Caribbean wedding gown designer is in her own words a “strategic choice” given that the Caribbean market cannot support a career in haute couture, so bridal wear was the closest field in terms of aesthetics.

Other interviewees (particularly those in the fashion sector) offered multiple examples depicting the pressure to alter their creative outputs as a result of their brand strategy. Zion Clothing designers, Candice and Crystal spoke about how they would love to branch out into lingerie but they have to wait until their brand grows and matures before they can take such risks. Stella, another designer also expressed similar sentiments explaining how her brand strategy affects her creative liberty. She said:

“I have an upper income clientele. It’s mostly professional women. So that kind of hinders how wide I can go, you know, creatively in some areas. So, for instance, if I wanted to do some very very sexy things, I have to price those low, because the type of women who would want that sort of things would not be the type of women who have the disposable income to buy something like this[gestures to gown she is hand-beading]. So, in the higher-end stuff, you have to be a bit more classical and um, conservative. And in the lower-end stuff you could be a bit more avant-garde.” (Stella, Veteran fashion designer, Trinidad)

As she points out, in her particular experience the price point of her work dictates how innovative the piece she creates can be. While this is a personal decision and varies from designer to designer, it is not an uncommon tactic. It further illustrates the fact that it is sometimes difficult for cultural producers to merge what they want to create with what they need to create in order to continue building a strong and sustainable brand. It also shows that creative choices are inevitably shaped by economic necessity.

The regional music sector has also been moulded by commercial agendas. As academic Suzanne Burke explains, “the formulaic nature of the festival/popular music is negatively influencing creativity and innovation with regards to the textual and semiotic elements of the music. This trend has resulted in an increasingly homogenous soundscape that can inevitably affect efforts at market placement due to poorly developed differentiation and branding of the music product” (Burke, 2011, p.4). In a system where live music is the primary source of income, artists are inclined to produce music that will work for the party circuit and thus they stick to the ‘jump and wave’ formula which has proven successful and will guarantee their employment during the festival season.

However recently, particularly in the fashion industry, cultural producers have adopted a popular brand extension strategy, launching lower-priced sub-brands in an attempt to protect their creativity. As one fashion designer explains, “You do a diffusion line that’s for a different crowd, and then it allows you to express your creativity in different ways without being limited by what you set your brand identity as”. By expanding their brands and targeting different markets, designers have now managed to both inflate their potential client base and simultaneously ensure they maintain the liberty to express themselves creatively. Solutions such as these are not just limited to the fashion sector but have also been replicated in other cultural fields. For example, in the festival sector, Carnival bands have also launched numerous sub-brands. Take for example, Tribe Carnival, which is arguably the most popular

Carnival band in Trinidad and Tobago, and which has launched sister mas band Bliss Carnival, as well as the Red Ants events brands. These sub-brands allow the parent company to venture into a diverse range of cultural products and service streams while benefiting from the strength of the parent brand. Strategies such as these allow for a greater level of creative freedom that is uninhibited by the parent brand's guidelines.

In conclusion it is evident that creativity and brand are closely interconnected within the Caribbean creative economy. From the perspective of those working in the cultural sector, brand and brand expectations have direct impact on their creative work. It is also quite apparent that creative production is affected by self-imposed brand strategies, and that strategic choices, often informed by tacit knowledge or assumptions about the consumer palate, often shape the ways in which creativity is manifested. Ultimately, it is clear that creativity needs to be understood not as a 'thing' but as an ongoing process within which creative expression and brand have a complex relationship that is constantly mediated by the creator, and shaped by the unique circumstances that the Caribbean framework presents.

6.5 Brand and Value

Apart from creativity, another theme that came to the fore when discussing how brand influences creative economy's dynamics is that of value. 'Value' has always been a highly debated and politicised term, and its complexity is no doubt increased when it is contextualised within the creative economy, within which various types of value are negotiated. As discussed in Chapter Three, symbolic value is a defining element of the creative economy, however, one cannot overlook the role of economic value as well. While they are sometimes presented as polarised paradigms, the relationship between the two is in reality quite intimate as each has a direct impact on the other. As David Throsby explains, "Creative artists in fact supply a dual market – a physical market for the good, which determines its

economic price, and a market for ideas, which determines the good's cultural price" (Throsby, 2010 p.21). This cultural price, or rather cultural value is often taken for granted since it seems intrinsic and thus somewhat immeasurable. In addition to this, as Frey (2008) explains, cultural researchers often focus too intently on economic markers since experience has shown that this type of 'scientific proof' is essential for securing government support and attracting crucial investments. While the economic dimension and the demonstrability of financial returns are necessary as we are discussing an economic system, the cultural or public value of cultural goods and services cannot be overlooked in its place (O'Brien, 2014).

The issue of price

In discussing brand value, price must also be mentioned given that it is a manifestation of value. When discussing cultural consumption, there is often no direct or linear link between what people are willing to pay for a cultural good and how much they value it. However, what is distinctive about the Caribbean space is the fact that the culture of the region dictates that certain cultural goods and services should actually be free, a prime example being music. Interviews with stakeholders shed light on the fact that Caribbean people have an aversion to paying for music be it privately, or in terms of purchasing licenses for public events. In an interview with an executive at Jamaica's leading music publishing organisation, she explained that her company's motto and mandate is 'valuing your musical creativity' and as such one of her primary tasks is tackling the public's aversion to paying for music. She says:

"We have to educate the public as to the musical value. A lot of the public also don't even know that there is a copyright act. And also, they themselves are asking why should we pay when we are promoting the music of the artist."

She also pointed out that the aversion is not just limited to local music, it extends to international music as well.

“...they just don’t have an understanding that copyright needs to be paid for and they should respect copyright. It’s across the board. When they have a party they play both local and foreign music, but they just don’t want to take out a license. So it is across the board, I don’t think it is particular to any type of music that is being played.” (Denise, Executive Jamaica Association of Composers, Authors and Publishers)

Culturally speaking, Caribbean people feel that music is a free commodity, regardless of where the music originates. As such, it is not necessarily that Caribbean music is under-valued, it is simply that the region’s cultural landscape does not facilitate a link between value and monetary payments. Gerald, an interviewee who runs a popular music website, is convinced that Caribbean people will never pay for music, and consequently Caribbean artists will continue to give it away for free. He further illustrated this point when he related his experience of conducting his own unofficial willingness-to-pay study, where he stood on the street and asked people if they would be willing to donate money so that a popular local artist would be paid:

“I’ve even done a little case-study myself and we worked with a producer and we were just like we’re going to have a little kiosk, and when you have a hit song tell us. He got a hit song and then we set up this kiosk and we had people walking by it. And we said you know put in one dollar, one dollar for the song. Nobody did it. Nobody did it. They wouldn’t even give a likkle dollar. It’s not a US dollar, it’s a Jamaican dollar.”⁷⁹ (Gerald, Founder and Director, Jamaican music website)

While his study is not scientifically sound, it is emblematic of the overwhelming attitude that Caribbean people have in relation to paying for music. These attitudes are reflected in the fact that the region has one of the highest per capita rates for piracy globally, estimated at

⁷⁹ For comparison, \$1.00 in Jamaican currency is the equivalent of £0.0060 in GBP or \$0.0079 in US dollars as of July 2016.

approximately 80 percent (Nurse, 2007). While the region's shortcomings in intellectual property management do contribute, the issue being highlighted here is that ingrained cultural beliefs shape the ways in which value and price correlate in the Caribbean's creative economy. As such, determining the relationship between brand and value in the Caribbean context should not rest solely on the issue of price as this and other predictive economic markers for assessing value prove inadequate.

6.5.1 Perspectives on brand value

In order to develop an accurate understanding of value, as it is conceptualised by the region's cultural practitioners, when conducting interviews, the researcher deliberately did not specify whether she was referring to economic or cultural value. The result of this is that the research unearthed a broad range of interpretations of each, as well as the complexities that exist in the relationship between them.

In exploring how value in both its economic and cultural manifestations is shaped by brand, one of the first questions raised was who or what determines the value of a cultural brand? This question is particularly thought-provoking in the regional context, as the unstructured nature of the market means many cultural sectors are devoid of the traditional channels for assessing the value of cultural products e.g. music charts, annual reports (Straw, 2015; Anand and Peterson, 2000). Furthermore, as creators are self-managed, revenue data remains private and thus cannot be evaluated and comparatively assessed. The absence of such assessment tools within the creative industries means that brand value is determined by alternative factors.

When asked who or what determines the value of a cultural brand some interviewees indicated that the consumer was the primary arbiter of value. As Christopher explained,

“I mean you make music not for the aficionado, but for the common man. The common man is the one that determines what is popular and what is not popular, not some music authority from on high. I mean, people have finely tuned sensibilities and instruments, [even though] they may not be able to break it down and expatiate on why they feeling this or why they feeling that.” (Christopher, Artist – singer, writer, producer and director)

To the consumer, the value of the good lies in the symbolic realm, so while functionality is important, the traits, associations, emotions and social-symbolic properties are what make a cultural brand valuable. When a brand becomes valuable to a consumer and a long-lasting relationship develops, the brand also builds customer equity, which refers to the total value of the businesses’ customer portfolio to the company (Romero and Yague, 2015). As such, the view that value lies in the hands of the customer is correct insofar as the customer’s estimation or perception of the worth of the brand and their subsequent loyalty to the brand are critical factors when negotiating both cultural and economic brand value.

On the other end of the spectrum, some cultural producers expressed their beliefs that the value of their brand was self-determined by themselves as creators. As two designers explained: “I think we control the value of our brand. Because if we were to stop doing it now, it stops. There is no more Zion”.⁸⁰ For these cultural producers, their brand value and the subsequent equity that is built over time is a direct reflection of their personal investment in their work.

Still, the source of brand value is not limited to either the consumer or the creator, the value (dependent on the product) can also be intrinsic. When cultural products and services transcend their functional purposes and become about the experience, the intrinsic value of

⁸⁰ Brand’s name replaced by pseudonym.

the brand increases exponentially. For example, in describing the Carnival festival, the owner of one of the most popular regional event companies explained:

“There’s a certain power that comes with Carnival that cannot be described. There’s a frenzy associated with the season that embodies persons in such a way that not only do they enjoy themselves by dancing and being free, but they are willing to pay for the experience that Carnival provides.” (Justin, Founder, Regional entertainment company)

His argument is that people do not pay for services rendered, they pay for the ‘frenzy’ of the event. As previously discussed in Chapter Three, cultural brands are experiential and thus it is no surprise that brand experience has emerged as a primary source of brand value.

Governing bodies and brand value

The value of cultural goods can also be explored from the perspective of government institutions. Whilst regional governments have all publicly pledged their support for the creative industries,⁸¹ many of those involved in the sector have challenged the idea that their respective governments genuinely value the creative industries. Kwame explains:

“I think that all governments have taken the power of the calypso music for granted. And they have never really found ways, or really wanted to find ways to establish and develop both the profile and the importance of the music industry, especially where calypso is concerned, and never found it necessary to do so. They keep talking about diversifying the economy, and things like that, and yet they failed to make a difference in terms of the promotion of calypso, in more ways

⁸¹ In February 2015, CARICOM’s 26th Inter-sessional meeting for Heads of Governments of CARICOM was dedicated to developing the region’s human and cultural assets, with a particular focus on the cultural industries.

than one.” (Kwame, Calypsonian and Executive, Trinbago Unified Calypsonian’s Organisation)

His opinion reflects the general consensus that although culture is being highlighted, it is still not being valued. The proof that the region’s cultural artefacts are not valued is reflected in the institutional frameworks (outlined in Chapter Five) within which cultural producers currently work. The lack of investment, policy, infrastructure and training opportunities means that the regional landscape remains a challenging one, and this of course has several implications for brand in the creative economy. How can cultural brands prosper in an environment which does not value their cultural contributions? How can local brands develop in a space where there are no avenues for expansion?

Consider for example the issue of local airplay, which has been a source of contention in the regional music industry for decades. According to a September 2013 press release, at the Annual General Meeting for the Eastern Caribbean Collective Organisation for Music Rights (ECCO), it was revealed that only ten percent (10%) of the distribution pay-out for members would be given to local artists since the radio stations played primarily foreign music. In fact, to date Jamaica is the only nation within the Caribbean with a radio station dedicated solely to regional music. In his capacity as a cultural activist Kwame discussed the challenges he faces in this local context saying:

“The bigger challenge is here in Trinidad and Tobago because the music isn’t played enough. Its trouble to fight for at least 50% for local content...Local content – that is the biggest struggle. If we could get a victory there, it would make such a difference to the lives of so many of our citizens... You know, you can go anywhere in the world and sell the music, and people will say – “yeah I like this music”, “where is this music from”, “oh, Trinidad and Tobago alright”. And when they come to Trinidad and Tobago, or when they tune in to Trinidad and Tobago,

they don't hear the music! So they want to know well? They confused, you know. If it is that a foreign label, or recording company wants to do some business, if they access the Trinidad and Tobago market to get an indication as to what support this music has, what this artist has in Trinidad and Tobago, nothing! So that's the difficulty here.” (Kwame, Calypsonian and Executive, Trinbago Unified Calypsonian's Organisation)

The lack of support for local music is evident, and the government's inaction in tackling the issue sends a clear message about how it prioritises its local music sector. This indifference towards the sector is easily discernible to outside parties and can of course inform their valorisation of the local economy.

Furthermore, the fact that music is so undervalued highlights a larger issue – the cultural hierarchy that exists in the region. This hierarchy means that certain cultural sectors are prioritised while others are side-lined and must jostle for funding. The pecking order varies from island to island however the metrics remain the same – industries which earn more receive more funding. In the Caribbean, festivals (which also drive tourism), remain a top earner. In interviewing the director of one of Jamaica's most prominent festivals, she explained the relationship between corporate/governmental sponsorship and value saying:

“There are two things that sponsors use. If they have a kind of social conscience about their company and they want to align their company. Like banks for instance like to align their company with high culture activities. Like the national dance company or classical stuff that they think gives their organisation a good image...because it makes them look as if they are socially aware, and that they are part of the community and they are willing to support the community... The other thing that will make them sponsor you, is if your event is big enough that they can sell their products. So huge sporting events they will sponsor because the crowds are going to be there and when they put up their banner and they advertise they

know that a percentage of that crowd will buy their product, whether it is a phone, or a drink or some shoes, or whatever. So those are the two things, a kind of social consciousness consideration, or a definite financial consideration as to how many people they can sell their product to.” (Ethel, Co-founder, National Jazz Festival, Jamaica)

Her analysis of the sponsorship process sheds some light on how external parties determine value. While it does predictably highlight the relationship between financial returns and value, it also demonstrates that a brand’s ability to engender goodwill on behalf of an investor or sponsor is also a dimension that is considered when determining its value. It is also clear that a historical and institutionalised cultural hierarchy exists and that it too plays a crucial role in defining brand value.

6.5.2 Locality and brand value: The indigenous vs. the imported

During the course of this research, another theme that kept resurfacing was the importance of the source of cultural products in determining brand value. When pressed as to whether locals valued local brands, reactions from the interviewees were varied. Denise, an executive at Jamaica Association of Composers, Authors and Publishers eagerly claimed “Yeah they do. They do, because if our artists from the 60s and 70s and 80s can still be touring and really doing well, it shows the value that the international community and the local community places on our music”. Christopher, an artist himself agreed that the work is valued, however he emphasised that the value fluctuates continuously, based on the time of year. He stated:

“I think we have a kind of schizophrenia about ourselves. We just came out of Carnival and all you hear on the radio play is 100 percent [local music]. And then as soon as the Carnival is done, you flip it back. It’s part of who we are now. It’s part of our culture. I think we’ve always taken on the music of the world, we have

an appreciation for the music of the world, but we've always also had a fairly heavy dose of something called self-contempt, where in many regards we consider 'the other' expression as superior to us at certain points in time. Except maybe at Carnival time." (Christopher, Artist – singer, writer, producer and director)

His argument reflects the uniqueness of working in the region's festival sector, where the popularity of local brands is dictated by temporal circumstances, meaning that they become more popular whenever festival or carnival season is approaching. This is not only limited to music, since fashion brands also receive an upsurge due to the rise of events being conducted at that time.

Now while there was a general consensus that local brands are valued, across all sectors the majority of cultural practitioners voiced concerns about the value of local brands when juxtaposed with foreign brands on local and regional markets. Examining the interview data it is evident that imported cultural products and brands are perceived as more valuable than their indigenous counterparts. As discussed in Chapter Three, consumer ethnocentrism can result in a preferential bias towards local goods. However, in many cases, the opposite occurs and foreign produced goods become more prized than local alternatives. Research indicates that these perspectives or biases are not based only on external factors such as the product category and the reputation of the country or origin, but also on intrinsic factors related to social identity such as sense of national identity and the degree of consumer cosmopolitanism (Mockaitis et al., 2013; Zeugner-Roth et al., 2015).

This assumption that the value of foreign brands usurps local ones is not only widely accepted by this thesis' interviewees, but it is also clearly reinforced and reflected in the marketing and branding strategies used by commercial retailers across the creative economy. Magazine publisher Lyn explains that although she has noticed an increasing amount of pride for local

brands, the fierce competition from imported brands is facilitated by local merchants. She explains:

“Right now, mostly people think you know, like in my case, Vogue is better than She [Magazine]. And it will get a better placement than mine would, because mine is local and will go to the bottom...” (Lyn, Editor and Publisher, Caribbean fashion magazine)

Her experience of having her local magazine always placed on the lower shelves reflects the local belief that regional consumers have a marked preference for foreign brands. This strategy of giving foreign brands preferential treatment is evident across all cultural sectors. One interviewee describes how this plays out in the festival sector saying:

“Look at the Jamaica Jazz and Blues Festival in Montego Bay down in Jamaica. It is a huge, it is a humongous mass event, and it is based on, it is sold around having a very large North American star performer come. The local performers are treated not very well. They are not given the same level of artistic and cultural respect. They are not given the same level of cultural prominence in the whole scheme of things. So they bring a Mariah Carey and pretty much 90% of the budget is spent on that. Or they bring um, whoever, these huge humongous stars, one year it was Diana Ross and so forth. And then the local artists are relegated down the ladder as being fairly insignificant.” (Ethel, Co-founder, National Jazz Festival, Jamaica)

Yet again, local work is evidently undervalued when compared with that of foreign producers. The reinforcement of this inequality is clearly supported by the marketing, branding and even organisational strategies that local industry stakeholders employ. Left unchecked, these strategies will ensure that local brand value continues to be underestimated and in so doing contribute to the stagnation that many local brands currently experience.

6.5.3 Redefining brand value within a colonialist framework

Developing out of the discussion on the disparity in the value between local and imported brands, the topic of colonialism came to the fore. When asked what was the root of this deeply ingrained belief that ‘foreign is better’, many of the interviewees were quick to declare the region’s colonialist history as a core factor. Colonialism has had an indelible effect on the social, cultural, political and economic regimes existent in the region today, and in many cases it has left the Caribbean in a uniquely disadvantaged position on the global scale.⁸² As such, it is understandable that this colourful history still has such a strong impact on the local economy and the value with which local cultural products and brands are imbued.

Implications for brand identity

The historical colonialist framework from within which Caribbean cultural products are produced has an immense impact on Caribbean brand identity. As interviewee Elizabeth said of the Jamaican people: “Their view and their vision of their culture is limited to their life experience”. Acknowledging that the varying histories of the region’s nations have shaped the worldview of their people, it is no surprise then that brand identity, on a personal, commercial or national scale still reflect colonialist value systems, especially given the fact that politically-speaking, many Caribbean islands are still tied to their former colonial rulers.⁸³

Caribbean people are however quite aware of the colonialist ideals that still permeate their cultures. In the 1970s, the black power movements in the Caribbean (Teelucksingh, 2012; Quinn, 2014) were purposeful attempts to shed the colonialist cultural identity that had been

⁸² In 2013 CARICOM established the CARICOM Reparations Commission to organise the region’s bid to claim compensation for the long-standing effects of colonialist rule.

⁸³ To date, the Queen of England is still the Head of State for Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Grenada, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

thrust on the region. Speaking about the impact of this movement on the jazz community Ethel shares:

“In the whole region I think, there was a move to create a new identity away from the European and North American aesthetic. People wanted to say we are Caribbean people, we are not just offshoots of the European imperial and colonial system. And so the new musical images and the new cultural images began to mitigate against jazz because it was thought that jazz was a North American product and that it was alien to the Caribbean. So there was a definite move away from jazz because it was thought that jazz did not have anything to do with the Caribbean. And so Jazz has suffered as a result of that.” (Ethel, Co-founder, National Jazz Festival, Jamaica)

As Ethel mentioned, some cultural art forms, like jazz suffered exclusion due to their perceived origins in the Americas. Conversely, some aspects of culture which were considered wholly local were also excluded because they were not aligned with the popular vision for the newfound national identity. As another interviewee explains:

“People of African descent, we have to remember that we were a colonised people. And so the issues of race and class and all of those biases and prejudices in relation to class are very current in our society. So you don’t use, back in the 70s, Rastafari. Rasta is subversive. So it’s a subversive element that you’re introducing into the mainstream and it continues to be somewhat subversive. I mean even though people have dreadlocks hairstyles and you know everybody is sporting dreadlocks, really and truly in the fundamental seat of power – still not acceptable. So those are some of the things that you have to grapple with as a nation. I mean we are fifty odd years old, we still have a lot of growing to do, but it takes time.” (Halcyon, Entertainment Executive, Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment, Jamaica)

Her testimony is further proof that imperialist ideals still pervade Caribbean societies and that the historical context continues to define the lens through which Caribbean people view their culture. Overall, it is evident that the national and regional drive to shake the colonial identity and celebrate the uniqueness of the Caribbean has had both positive and negative consequences. Furthermore, as will be discussed in Chapter Seven, this anti-colonialist movement has led to an increased focus on 'local', where creators are sometimes frowned upon for drawing inspiration outside of the Caribbean. At any rate, this historical shift that has allowed creators to celebrate the uniqueness of the Caribbean and begin moving past colonialist constructs is undoubtedly still shaping the way cultural identity and cultural brands are perceived and received within the region.

Implications for value and self-worth

The pervasiveness of colonialist values in the regional creative economy is also evident in the clear need for external validation. Within the region, there is still the practise of looking to the outside for confirmation or endorsement before recognising the value of cultural work and brands. As one interviewee explained:

“I think that in Trinidad there is a natural respect for calypso and soca. There’s no question about that. And just in the same way that we here value reggae. But I think there is a feeling that unless the local artists is recognised by the rest of the world, you know in the same way that Bob Marley was recognised by the rest of the world, in the same way that Rihanna has been recognised by the rest of the world. Then they are not going to have the same place on the stage with a John Legend... If we don’t have external validation, we don’t know what to do with ourselves.” (Ethel, Co-founder, National Jazz Festival, Jamaica)

Interestingly, another interviewee, Lyn used the exact same reference saying that “I mean, Rihanna when she was Bajan, was probably struggling, we never heard her. It’s only now that Rihanna is international that we listen to somebody like Rihanna and watch what she’s wearing”.

At a 2007 social sciences conference, this same issue was addressed in a paper entitled “Export Orientation and the Cultural Industries: Case of Barbados”. The author wrote: “As we further grapple with our notion of self-determination together with our collective will to free ourselves of the last vestiges of a colonial past rooted in brutish memories of slavery and a Plantocracy system, it is sometimes unfortunate that we find ourselves depending on “the other” to help us create our own icons. It is as if we have to await the canonization of a Nobel Prize or a Grammy Award before we have the courage to install our cultural heroes. Sometimes we are bogged down, in our quintessential Barbadian style, with over-regulation and paralysis by analysis, when our heroes stand before us for all to see with the naked eye. In other words, as a nation, we need to be confident about who we are as people and maintain our sense of pride in our culture. Until such time, our breakthrough into the international market will be nothing short of sporadic and piecemeal” (Walcott, 2007, p.11).

The practise of undervaluing local work, talent or brands until they achieve international success speaks volumes about how much faith the region has in its cultural ability and its cultural producers. It also speaks to larger more complex issues of identity, self-worth and cultural confidence. This need for external accolades and a validation “from the metropolises” as one interviewee called it, are traits of colonialist empirical rule and it is evident that they still continue to affect the way value is calculated and interpreted across the regional creative economy.

Implications for brand strategy

This colonialist framework has also had a significant impact on regional brand strategy. One interviewee discussed her experience in Jamaica where it took a long time for the nation to really accept and celebrate the iconic status that the island's brand image had achieved, by way of Rastafarian culture:

“Rastafari or even the use of the red, green and gold - those colours that are considered iconically Rasta, it is not something that was embraced, in terms of the marketing and promotion of Jamaica, by the JTB.⁸⁴ A few years ago, it wasn't something that was embraced. So for example, if you had a project, if you had a campaign that involved a man with dreadlocks, you probably wouldn't see those images. If you go through the campaigns, you wouldn't see any of that. And those are things that I think, and by the way I'm still fairly controversial in my thinking on this one, but those are things that I think we have to look at. There are still people who believe that those are not images we should be using to market and promote Jamaica. So are they inconsistencies or, I'm not sure, well I have my opinion, whether or not it's an inconsistency or it goes back to that issue of how we define ourselves. That personality – that brand personality. I still think that there are some people, many people actually, who are a little bit more conservative in the way that they define the brand.” (Halcyon, Entertainment Executive, Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment, Jamaica)

The idea that Jamaica was essentially sitting on a gold mine and choosing not to officially align itself with the powerful brands that are Bob Marley and Rastafarianism, speaks volumes about how colonialist ideas still pervade current government directives. Even today, many criticise

⁸⁴ The Jamaica Tourist Board.

the island for not fully capitalising on Bob Marley's legacy and building on the national brand image whose creation he has spearheaded.

Aside from this, another glaring implication of the region's colonialist history is in the market selection for its cultural brands. In discussions around music, Rita, a high ranking government official mused:

“...Why don't we work on our immediate markets, our regional markets? Because our regional markets are familiar with this kind of music, and they have an affinity to it. Why not focus on the other markets that like our music, that are similar, like South Africa, and Nigeria? Instead we want to go WOMEX and South by Southwest, because they think that's the world. But that's not the world, that's not the stage we should be working with.” (Rita, Executive – Culture Division, Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism, Trinidad).

She goes on to suggest that Nigeria, which has a population of 185 million and music similar to that of the Caribbean, as well as Latin America, which is geographically closer to the region, would be more attractive markets. However, as she explains, Caribbean people have been repeatedly conditioned to consider the United States as the Holy Grail for success. Now the region's colonialist history, while somewhat responsible cannot be solely blamed for the local affinity with the American market, since the media's role (inclusive of local media) in representing the American dream, together with a host of sociocultural and political factors are also culpable. Added to which, it can also be argued that the appeal of the American landscape lies in its structured market, which other developing states such as Nigeria do not have. However, since Caribbean creators have learnt how to make money via alternative revenue streams,⁸⁵ they should be able to apply the same strategies to other unstructured

⁸⁵ Due to high piracy rates, performing at live music events represents the primary income stream for most musical artists.

markets. At any rate, it must be acknowledged that the region's colonialist history contributes to the fact that many creators may be pre-dispositioned to see the American market as the optimal space for brand expansion and in so doing ignore other potentially worthwhile markets.

Dismantling the colonial mentality

In discussing the lingering effects of a colonial past on the cultural present, the narrative often shifted to ways in which Caribbean people could redefine cultural value in their favour. Christopher summed up the task at hand perfectly, stating: "Well we have to find some means of assessing the value and establishing the value. I mean I think it has to start from our own inherent appreciation of the thing. I mean a depth of appreciation". Many others agreed, expressing the view that tackling the underlying issue, a colonialist mentality, would be the only way to enact real change. Jordan, a designer explained:

"But in order for us to buy that what we produce is just as good as what is produced in India or China, or Columbia or Bangladesh is just as simple as we appreciating us for who we are...We still have that stigma that we're consumers, and we don't understand that we can also produce for the rest of the world to consume what we produce. But that's where marketing comes into play, we have to have people buy into sense of self, sense of worth, sense of value and how we can put that to the global market. You know, we need to stop thinking that the other people can do it better than us, because we've proven in so many different arenas that we can do it just as well as everyone else. You know, why not fashion, why not creative industries?" (Jordan, Founder and Director, National Fashion Show, Trinidad and Tobago)

Getting people to recognise and appreciate their culture is really the first step in engaging the public in a positive re-evaluation of local cultural brands. While the public will patronise local

creators, it is often on a one-off basis and not the consistent support that the industry needs. Thus the larger issue is re-calibrating society's perspective on the value of local brands. As Rita explains:

“My grandmother taught me charity begins at home. When locals are wearing our local brands, you are beginning to get somewhere. Why we feel we need to focus only on outside, and I go back to our buy local campaign...To establish an international brand, you first have to have a local brand. We need to work on buying local.” (Rita, Executive – Culture Division, Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism, Trinidad)

This re-calibration would need to work both ways, given that at present not only do consumers not patronise local cultural artists, but cultural producers also do not appear to value their domestic markets. While a call for a complete switch to local consumption may not be entirely sustainable, it may prove more fiscally and socially beneficial for cultural producers to shift their principal focus to the regional market. Ideally, a comprehensive overhaul of the ways in which cultural producers engage with markets could encourage social change and incrementally increase the value of local brands.

In conclusion, the above analysis of value highlights the varying perspectives on who or what determines the value of a cultural brand. It also explores the distinctive relationship between brand and pricing, showing that within the local context cultural producers must contend with the public's belief that certain cultural goods should be free. The discussion also examines the relationship between the source of a good (local vs imported) and the value that it is assigned, and illustrates how this can be directly linked to the region's tumultuous colonial history.

Conclusion

This chapter was intended to explore the role that brand plays within the Caribbean's creative economy. Its first task was exploring the thesis first research questions ((RQ 1): *How is brand understood, constructed and used by cultural producers within the Caribbean creative economy?* Using the voices of the industry stakeholders, the chapter's first section (section 6.1) deconstructs the term brand, looking at the various forms it takes and the multiplicity of ways in which it can be defined within the regional context. In summary, brand is defined as:

- (i) A ubiquitous dimension that shapes every part of the cultural exchange
- (ii) An intangible element manifested through language, religion, artistic expression and even people.
- (iii) A means through which cultural identity is imprinted on cultural products, imbuing them their distinctiveness.
- (iv) A commercial tool which can be used for differentiation and market calibration.

The diversity present across the abovementioned definitions raises an important concern which is that there is a clear lack of consensus around what brand is or does. In fact, section 6.1.2 of this chapter focused on the fact that brand has become an industry buzzword, whose popularity usurps its current utility across the regional creative economy. The lack of understanding surrounding brand means that brand is not being fully utilised because its potential impact is unrecognised or underestimated. Furthermore, the lack of consensus around brand has resulted in a challenging environment where facilitating collaborative brand initiatives remains a daunting task. The likelihood of this improving would depend on changing ideas around brand, so that it no longer represents empty rhetoric but is acknowledged as a tool that can drive sector growth and development. However whether this can be achieved within the current sociocultural and political climate remains to be seen.

Section 6.2 of this chapter explores the various way in which brand is constructed. Relying on the narratives and lived experiences of the interviewees, three core approaches to brand building are identified: innovation, strategic growth and client-centric. What is particularly interesting however, is that in comparing brand building across the thesis three core sectors, the music sector was found to have its own unique approach where the structure of the sector dictates that brand must be a last-stage consideration. The chapter also argues that there is an intrinsic brand in some sectors such as theatre, where the nature of the cultural offering means that it is inherently bound to the national brand. In light of the above, one can infer that brand strategy must be aligned to the idiosyncrasies of the particular sector in order to assure success. However, this chapter also debated the idea that all cultural sectors engender an intimate relationship with consumers and thus can employ the same brand-building strategies. Still, what is clear is that the region presents a distinct landscape for the creative industries given its particular challenges with its small and unstructured markets, intellectual property management, regional competitiveness and so on. As such, one can conclude that brand strategy must then be adapted not only to meet the needs of the specific creative sector, but also to combat the distinct local and regional challenges that are present across the Caribbean.

Section 6.3 of this chapter explores the practical application of brand across the regional creative economy. The chapter's first core argument is that brand represents a defence mechanism for protecting regional cultural products, service and events. In illustrating both the region's continued struggle with intellectual property management and the flow of cultural revenue away from the region, the chapter demonstrates that the Caribbean remains in a precarious position. As the region's cultural capital continues to be exploited by external parties, this thesis's assertion that brand represents an avenue to rectify this is a timely and relevant consideration. It is hoped that if regional governing authorities can be shown the

value of brand as a means of protection, they will be more inclined to invest in the brand management strategies that this thesis proposes can change the region.

Apart from the above, Section 6.3 also explores the role of what this thesis has defined as the metabrand, the larger unowned brands which dominate the region. In illustrating the role of the metabrand in the organisation and structure of the creative economy, the chapter demonstrates that it is both a novel and significant construct that has the potential to open up new frameworks for regional creative economy analysis. If the region is able to acknowledge the fact that some brands cannot be untethered from the larger metabrands that dominate the Caribbean, it would allow industry stakeholders to rethink the strategies employed in brand management on private, national and regional scales. In a similar vein, this section also touched on the benefits of collaborative frameworks, arguing that more cross-sectoral collaborations need to be implemented in order to bolster the regional creative economy. Drawing on the strength both collaborative frameworks and regional metabrands are valuable ideas that need to be explored further as they can offer new pathways for reconceptualising and reorganising the regional creative economy and ultimately driving its success.

The latter half of this chapter addresses RQ 2: *How does brand influence the dynamics of the Caribbean creative economy?* Section 6.4 explores the theme of creativity looking at how it is conceptualised from a Caribbean perspective. The chapter explains the way in which creativity is valorised within the regional context, however it also demonstrates that the region does not necessarily nurture creative development. This is important to note, as it renders context and raises the question of whether the creative economy can blossom in a region that neither prioritises nor rewards creative expression. Interestingly, this chapter also indicates that the distinct national contexts facilitate differing degrees of creative expression. This means that the frameworks and structures that are in place to encourage creative development differ from island to island, an important observation for later discussions regarding regional initiatives

such as Brand Caribbean. Still, what is perhaps most interesting in the context of this thesis on brand, is that the research shows that brand expectations shape regional creative production. The chapter argues that both internal and external perceptions around what the Caribbean should and can produce affect the way in which regional cultural producers work. It also examines brand's role in the strategic decisions that industry stakeholders make, discussing the tensions between creative expression and economic necessity. These tensions are not only existent on a personal level, but also on a larger national and regional scales. This thesis' claims that brand affects creative production on all these different levels is particularly important as the region's creative economy is still in an infantile state (compared to global competitors) where the direction of the economy is yet to be decided. As such, the region is in a uniquely fortunate position where stakeholders still have the opportunity to shape the economy and create national and regional sector brands. Unfortunately as this thesis will demonstrate in Chapter Seven, these opportunities are not currently being exploited.

The closing section of this chapter (Section 6.5) develops a discussion around brand and value. Beginning with a discussion on the distinct relationship between value and price, the thesis argues that within the local context value cannot be assessed using traditional economic markers. The chapter then proceeds to examine varying perspectives on brand value, looking at the role of the consumer, the creator and the intrinsic value of cultural products in determining value. Still, what is most enlightening is that the chapter examines the relationship between governments and the creative economy, arguing that their lack of institutionalised support belies their claims of valuing culture. As illustrated previously in Chapter Five, proper cultural policy frameworks are lacking in most regional states, proving that governments have been unwilling to put measures in place which can encourage and sustain their creative sectors. Still regional governments consistently claim to cherish local culture when in fact it is explicitly clear that they have failed to do so. Acknowledging the incongruity between what is

said and what is done is important, as it can force the region to take stock of its reality as opposed to focusing on the fiction that is represented in political rhetoric.

Finally, the last section of this chapter addresses the discrepancy between the value ascribed to local and foreign cultural goods. The chapter traces this disparity back to the region's colonial past, demonstrating how imperialist values and a resultant lack of cultural confidence influence how nationals assess cultural products and services. The chapter also demonstrates how colonialist frameworks shape the brand strategy implemented across the region, in terms of both national identity formation and market selection. Recognising the impact of the region's colonial history on contemporary cultural consumption patterns is a critical part of understanding the way in which the regional creative economy functions. The fact that brand is such an influential factor in the organisation of the regional creative economy is further proof that it needs to be an area of focus for both industry stakeholders and government agencies. However, the larger issue at hand is that this research demonstrates a dire need to recalibrate the region's notions around brand value, particularly because these beliefs have grave implications with regard to cultural identity, value and self-worth. It is clear that the Caribbean is now faced with the task of changing deep-rooted notions around value so that the region's cultural products are finally given the prominence they deserve, particularly in the local context. This task is of course quite daunting and as it is rooted in attitudinal change, it will take decades.

In conclusion, it is hoped that this chapter has given the reader a deeper understanding of both brand, and the multiplicity of ways in which brand influences the dynamics of the regional creative economy. Building on this, the following chapter proceeds to explore Brand Caribbean and its wider role within the global creative economy.

Chapter Seven: Understanding Brand Caribbean

The previous chapter presented an analysis of brand's role across the Caribbean's creative economy. This chapter builds on this and adopts a macro analytical approach, expanding the study of brand to focus on Brand Caribbean. The first part of the chapter addresses RQ 3: *What is 'Brand Caribbean', as defined within the global creative economy framework?* Section 7.1 begins by examining the elements that define Brand Caribbean, looking at the key concepts such as the relationship between brand and the environment, brand experience and brand personality. Following this, Section 7.2 then examines three core themes that have emerged from discussions around Brand Caribbean – Caribbeanness, authenticity and the implications attached to the Caribbean label.

The second portion of the chapter discusses the issues pertaining to RQ 4: *What are the relationships between national brands, cultural identities and Brand Caribbean?* Section 7.3 studies the unique relationships that exist between national identity, patriotism and the diasporic communities, examining the way in which they shape Brand Caribbean. Following this Section 7.4 then discusses regionalism and the impact of the competitive spirit on Brand Caribbean. Section 7.5 then proceeds to explore the move towards regional integration, discussing the collaborative effort that is necessary to fuel the regional brand.

The closing section of this chapter address the final research question RQ 5: *What role does Brand Caribbean play within the global creative economy?* Section 7.6 first allows the reader to develop an understanding of the Caribbean's current role on the global market. Following this, Section 7.7 examines the idea of brand success, looking at the way in which Caribbean cultural producers imagine success, and discussing the passivity that underlies their approaches to attain it. Ultimately, it is hoped that this chapter can shed light on Brand Caribbean and allow the reader to appreciate the distinctive elements that define it.

RQ 3: What is ‘Brand Caribbean’, as defined within the global creative economy framework?

7.1 Defining Brand Caribbean

Defining Brand Caribbean is an immense task, particularly because as discussed in Chapter Three, the relationship between a brand and a consumer is an intimate one, even more so in cases where the brand is linked to cultural identity. Thus in undertaking this exercise to define Brand Caribbean, there must be an understanding that the definitions, scope and nature of the brand differ based on a variety of personal factors including an individual’s position within the social strata, their role within the creative economy and any other number of factors. Moreover, one must also appreciate that brand can and will change in accordance with wider changes in the political, economic and social climate, and this is especially true in this context where Brand Caribbean is young and its support is still growing on both a grassroots and institutional level.

It is also important to recognise that the definitions surrounding Brand Caribbean shift dependent on whether it is being defined by an insider or an observer. While the lines between what constitutes an insider or outsider are blurred (a topic addressed later in section 7.2 on authenticity), a personal connection to the brand that is derived from a life lived within the Caribbean setting, will of course shape an individual’s perception of Brand Caribbean. Thus it is important to restate that this research is based on an emic perspective, drawing on the interpretations of regional cultural producers, as well as a Caribbean researcher.

Acknowledging the considerations listed above, this chapter aims to present an analysis of Brand Caribbean within the context of the creative industries, drawn from the voices and narratives of the cultural producers who know it best.

7.1.1 The intertwining of brand and environment

The geographical and environmental conditions which shape the Caribbean leave an indelible mark on all of the cultural work that comes out of the region. It is for this reason that the region's locality has become one of the most distinctive features of Brand Caribbean. For starters, the geography of the region creates a unique space. As one region, with multiple islands, the territories are close enough to sustain a shared history, yet dispersed enough to have their own unique cultural traditions. These distinctions across domestic or national experiences are the reason that Brand Caribbean is a diverse and multifaceted entity, and this tension between the shared experience and the domestic experience is an important dimension of Brand Caribbean. However, apart from the geographical layout of the region, there are several other ways in which the region's locality helps shape Brand Caribbean.

Firstly, the aesthetic appeal of the region's islands are a huge part of the Caribbean brand. For years touted as the home of 'Sun, sand and sea', the Caribbean has developed and worked tirelessly to maintain a reputation as a lush and colourful oasis (Nelson, 2011). Naturally, these environmental markers have become indispensable components of the brand and are naturally reflected in regional cultural production. Jordan, as fashion industry stakeholder explained the importance of not overlooking the value of the locale:

"Tobago aesthetically, and Tobago as Trinidad and Tobago, you know it's the natural landscape or what I would call a blank canvas where you can almost do anything and make it look as you want, because the look and feel of the island is great for that. So doing the event there, or the runway aspect of the event is exceptionally great. It gets away from the cookie-cutter look of doing it in a conference hall at a hotel at Lincoln Centre, New York. It's almost predictable! Whereas in Tobago, you can really create something and make it look however you want it to look...On top of that it also becomes a tourism product, where you

can also sell the island for what it's worth.” (Jordan, Founder and Director, National Fashion Show, Trinidad and Tobago)

The landscape of the Caribbean is a strong visual component of Brand Caribbean, and as such it offers a distinct background for the region's cultural products. Like Jordan's fashion event, many Caribbean brands celebrate the landscape, drawing on it to provide context for the cultural goods and services being provided. From fashion shoots, to music videos, to the scenes depicted in visual art and written about in literary texts, the landscape has been immortalised as one of the most distinctive features of Brand Caribbean.

In a similar way, Brand Caribbean draws heavily on the tropical climate. The tropics are characterised by their heat, humidity and dual seasons, and of course the tropical experience is a key selling point of any cultural activity that takes place across the region:

“When we are selling the festival, we say come to Hope Gardens in Kingston, its green, it's lush, the sun is going to be shining it's going to be a beautiful day and there's going to be beautiful music and there's going to be lots of Jamaican food for you to enjoy.” (Ethel, Co-founder, National Jazz Festival, Jamaica)

It is clear that the environment plays a huge role in the narrative surrounding festivals. Neil, a public servant describes a similar scenario, highlighting the role of cultural heritage in Barbados:

“What we're skilled at is taking spaces and creating events in those spaces. Huge Events. So we go to the Bushy Park International Racing circuit for example and we hold our soca monarch competition there, so we transform that entire space into a music dome...So the built heritage and natural heritage is also part of what we do. So our Bridgetown market event, which is kind of our last festival occurs on the Brandons beach area. So you're jumping along the highway – you are going

straight into the sea. You can picnic on the sand. We do something called ‘Pan Pun De Sand’ as well on Brandons, which is about a three mile long beach. And we set up two huge stages and on that you get to experience the sun, the sea and sweet, sweet pan, and artists. And that event normally holds about 25,000 people. We have ‘Soca on De Hill’ which takes place in our natural park. So we incorporate a lot of our natural and built heritage into everything that we do. So what we’re selling then is a complete Barbados experience.” (Neil, Marketing Professional, National Cultural Foundation Barbados)

The narrative above brings to mind the aims of UNESCO’s World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme (UNESCO, 2016b), which encourages the development of new frameworks which can allow stakeholders from the heritage and tourism sectors to mutually benefit from growing cultural tourism markets. When foreign consumers partake in the region’s cultural activities part of the appeal is the space within which the experience occurs, and thus the physical context is transcendent as it shapes the entire cultural exchange. Understanding this, cultural producers have learnt to capitalise on the region’s physicality by immersing their experiences and their patrons in the environment.

Location also of course impacts the type of cultural products that are produced. This is particularly true of the fashion industry, which is dictated by the climatological conditions of the region. As Nicholas, explained:

“I think we design, as with any other element of design, to some degree in the context of our environment. So the physical environment that we are in comes out, is accommodated in the design either with respect to function – you know elements of the climate, the rain, the seasons. Or, with respect to the form, in the context of colours, our choice of colours, fabrics, how things are laid out, how they fall, are draped and what not...Because anything that we design, or sell, or we market to wear is going to be worn in this environment to a large extent, and

designers usually try to accommodate, I don't want to say usually, naturally accommodate that environment.” (Nicholas, Executive, Fashion Association of Trinidad and Tobago)

Of course, all designers have to design in accordance with the needs of their target markets. However, as the designers of Zion Clothing explained, the fact that the region has only two seasons (dry and wet), means that their runway work will always be a resort collection.⁸⁶ However, instead of viewing this as a limitation, it can in fact be an advantage since the region can potentially be branded as the go to source for resort wear all year round. Thus the climatological consistency of the region can become the foundation for Brand Caribbean on the global fashion market.

Even within the music industry, the location appears to be intimately connected to the type of sound produced. In fact, some say that the link between the two is so natural that it is impossible to disassociate the location from the music. Tamoya, a brand manager at Bob Marley Group of Companies, described the relationship between the Caribbean locality and reggae as such:

“It’s hard to say, it’s hard to really describe, because I don’t know of it without it being here. [Reggae is] standing side by side with the region, beginning with the fact that we’re Caribbean, we’re easy-going, we have a vibe. So it’s reggae music, it’s relaxing, an easy-going kind of thing...” (Tamoya, Manager, Bob Marley Group of Companies, Jamaica)

Indeed, it is hard to envision something as iconic as reggae without the Caribbean as its default backdrop, an indication of how indissoluble the relationship between the art form and Brand Caribbean has become.

⁸⁶ A resort collection is an inter-season fashion collection that caters to warmer climates.

Overall, it is clear that the location is an indelible part of Brand Caribbean. However, this comes with its challenges, the most significant being the fact that the dispersal of the region's territories hinders collaboration. Elizabeth, a public servant executive addressed this, saying:

“I think geography has something to do with it too, because you know we are scattered, in terms of, you know, geographically. So it's very difficult. There are some people who have never travelled, to any of the islands, so it's very difficult for them to understand the Caribbean as a whole block, you know. So that's part of it. And although we do share some basic historical experiences, there are differences among us. And unfortunately I think those differences are played up more than our similarities and the ways in which we can work together to achieve whatever goals.” ((Elizabeth, Executive Director, Cultural Heritage Organisation, Jamaica)

The space which separates the islands physically, also separates the nationals who live there, both physically and from a sociocultural perspective (Paasi, 2003). Facilitating collaboration across the Caribbean proves difficult largely due to the lack of perceived wholeness across the region, particularly on a grassroots level. It is difficult to convince people who have never travelled the region to acknowledge a shared history and narrative, and to ultimately recognise the innate connection they share with the other islands. In this way the geographic layout of the region continues to play a significant part in the struggle to define Brand Caribbean.

7.1.2 Brand as an articulation of the lifestyle

Another definitive feature of Brand Caribbean is the Caribbean lifestyle. In discussing this, it is important to first clarify this thesis' interpretation of the term. While lifestyle has multiple interpretations depending on the academic discipline (Jensen, 2006), for the purpose of this thesis, it refers to the everyday cultural experience, as this is a reflection of the articulation of the term by this thesis' interview subjects. The Caribbean lifestyle is one that is characterised by warmth, vibrancy and diversity and these elements are reflected in "everything we use, we eat, the way we play, and the things we do" (Isla, Editor-in-Chief, Regional lifestyle magazine). In defining Caribbean brands, the lifestyle is repeatedly articulated as a significant 'pull factor'. Take for example the description of 'Brand Barbados' given below:

"When you think of a Barbados brand it's a lifestyle of several things. It's a lifestyle of being cool and relaxed, and not being stressed, which is encouraged by things like the sun, the ocean, our natural environment. And then there's the side of us that enjoys the party, that enjoys music, that enjoys family and fellowship. So all those things contribute to a brand about Barbados that is really living life well."

(Neil, Marketing Professional, National Cultural Foundation Barbados)

Like Brand Barbados, the Caribbean brand is also founded on the principle of living life well. However, it is important to remember that while this lifestyle is repeatedly included in regional brand discourse, lifestyle is ultimately shaped by social, cultural and economic factors and as such amounts to a unique and individualised experience. As such, it cannot be definitively and categorically defined. As interviewee Jordan wisely said when describing his home "Tobago is whatever you want Tobago to mean for you or to you", and in a similar vein there are a multiplicity of varying descriptions and interpretations of what the Caribbean lifestyle is or represents.

However, what is definitive is the fact that this Caribbean lifestyle remains a core component of Brand Caribbean, and thus it is unsurprising that it is prominently reflected in regional products. When asked to describe Caribbean music, Denise, an executive at Jamaica Association of Composers, Authors and Publishers Limited responded: “I always say just a feel good music that speaks to what is happening in each country at the point of time...Jamaican music is definitely a reflection of the lifestyle”. In this way, the music is a capsule for the Caribbean lifestyle, with its lyrics, musicality and presentation both steeped in and celebrating the merits of Caribbean life.

Paul, another interviewee, also expressed similar views going when discussing the branding of one of the region’s most prolific cultural products – reggae:

“In retrospect, you know, the marketing of it [reggae] was the style, the lifestyle of dancehall. And you know the riddims happen, and all the people meet up and each of the guys [the artists] participate in it. And they become sort of the actors of, or the image of the lifestyle.” (Paul, Marketing Executive, VP Records)

His assertion that a musical artist becomes an embodiment of the lifestyle is an important one. Indeed, iconic figures across the region have become representative of the distinct ‘vibe’ which the islands hold. Take again the example of Bob Marley, who it has been argued is “the best known secular figure” in modern times (Toynbee, 2007), and who has become the embodiment of the Jamaican lifestyle (Miller, 2010).

In discussing the Caribbean lifestyle, it is also important to acknowledge what is arguably its most fascinating characteristic – its diversity. While interviewing the founder of the Caribbean’s premiere lifestyle magazine, she touched on the topic saying:

“As I said before, although we’re labelled one region and we are, and there are a host of similarities from Cuba all the way down to Guyana, I think that every

single island is very unique. I think that the music that they produce is different. I think their food is different. I think that their personalities are different. So you look at Bajans for instance, and the people in Barbados are inherently very very different from the people in St. Lucia. The way they go out, the way they socialise, the way they interact with each other... And then thirty minutes up the road in St. Lucia, they are very very different. The food they eat is very different. How they enjoy their days is very different. Trinidad is very different to Jamaica. So I think every single island is different, which is why Brass⁸⁷ has been very successful I guess. One of the big things with Brass when I started was that no one understood how could I find enough content to produce four magazines a year, and was I going to run out? And seventeen years later, there's still so much content that I could produce." (Isla, Editor-in-Chief. Regional lifestyle magazine)

As previously discussed in Chapter Six, brand comes tied to expectations and in this case these expectations are born out of an idea about what the Caribbean and Caribbean life are like. It is often the case that the diversity that is present across these islands is overlooked, as many homogenise or oversimplify the Caribbean lifestyle, reducing it to stereotypical tropes about lounging on the beach. In reality, life in Jamaica is worlds apart from life in Barbados, owing to disparities in economic standing, a history of different social practises, a distinctly different ethnic makeup and numerous other factors, yet both represent a facet of the Caribbean lifestyle. This multiplicity of interpretations of the Caribbean lifestyle means that cultural producers have the room to create diverse products without being limited by a singular definition of Caribbean life. In the end, despite the difficulties in pinning down exactly what the Caribbean lifestyle is, it still remains highly distinctive, and it has evolved into a valuable regional asset and one of the most distinguishing characteristics of Brand Caribbean.

⁸⁷ Magazine's title has been replaced with a pseudonym.

Selling the experience

Understanding the role that lifestyle plays in Brand Caribbean, when cultural producers take their products to the market, the products do not stand alone, but are intricately tied to the experience that surrounds them. Neil explains:

“When we create and design our advertisement for example, we don’t just sell an event. We sell an experience. So if you look on our internet you will see our Crop Over⁸⁸ adverts, that included shots of the ocean, and speedboats, and hotels and that sort of thing. So you’re not just coming to jump in a fete or masquerade in a band, you’re coming to experience all of that, the golden sands, the blue seas, you know see a bit of polo, you name it.” (Neil, Marketing Professional, National Cultural Foundation Barbados)

Giselle, an interviewee from St. Lucia voiced similar views when discussing her island’s flagship event – the St. Lucia Jazz and Arts Festival:

“Persons are not just coming for music. But they get a taste of St. Lucia. What makes St. Lucia? What’s the culture behind St. Lucia? You know, what’s the history of this island? So you know, it gives you a little more... So you get a taste of everything, not just music.” (Giselle, Marketing Executive, St. Lucia Tourist Board)

In this way, Brand Caribbean, particularly in a cultural framework, has become about the island experience as opposed to the specific goods and services which are being retailed.

Even on a smaller scale, the value of the ‘experience’ has not been lost. In talking with Justin, one of the most successful regional entrepreneurs in the entertainment sector, he explained

⁸⁸ Crop Over is the largest national festival in Barbados. Taking place annually, it is a months-long arts and cultural festival which culminates in the Carnival/Kadooment parade.

“sometimes I feel like a drug dealer”. Referencing a conversation he had with a colleague he clarifies:

“One of the things he said to me that really stuck out was “You’re almost like a drug dealer”. And I was like “Why you say that? [Laughs]”. And he was like, “You are selling people a drug. And that drug is an experience. And it [is] so wicked that you don’t have to bring this drug from Mexico, or you don’t have to go and do a set of planting in the hills. You have created this drug in your office or in your home. You have created the concepts at home, or you have created the concepts in your mind, and you are really selling an experience. And in essence, when you look at brand, especially for me, when you look at brand and events, it’s kind of like - how does your brand give an experience at an event. And that is the difference really and truly.” (Justin, Founder, Regional entertainment company)

Branding an experience is a tactic that has been heavily adopted across the region. Cultural producers recognise the value that the context of the Caribbean experience imbues products with, and as such they have chosen to celebrate this relationship and use it to its fullest potential. As discussed in Chapter Three, brand is a means of differentiation, and here creators are using brand not to differentiate the tangible products, but rather to differentiate among the experiences attached to these products. It is for this reason that this thesis can claim that the way in which the Caribbean experience is intimately woven into all of its cultural products and services has in fact become a defining characteristic for Brand Caribbean.

7.1.3 *Brand personality*

Apart from the above, another way in which brand can be defined is through personality. The concept of brand personality gained significant prominence in the late 1990s following the publication of Jennifer Aaker's seminal article which defined brand personality as "the set of human characteristics associated with a brand" (Aaker, 1997, p. 347). In recent years, there have been increasing studies on brand anthropomorphism, particularly since the practise of attaching human characteristics to brands has become quite popularised (Guido and Peluso 2015). Research has also proven that "the personality factor provided a critical and enduring differentiation that helps to simplify the consumer's decision-making process" (Wee, 2004, p. 320). The concept of brand personality is also not limited to mere products, but can be applied to places as well (Upadhyaya, 2012), and as such it is a useful construct for not only for understanding the personality of Caribbean creative products, but also for understanding the personality of Brand Caribbean.

In order to help interviewees engage with the idea of brand personality, they were asked to personify Brand Caribbean, either in a general sense or in relation to their specific sectors. Their responses varied, however there were a few common traits that stood out. The first trait that was touched upon by many interviewees, regardless of their sector, was the fact that Brand Caribbean is a positive and happy brand. When asked to describe the brand's personality, Avril, an executive at the Caribbean Tourism Organisation⁸⁹ said, "I would describe it as cheerful (laughs). Very simple, cheerful... there would be other attributes that I'd look at, but I'd say it's a cheerful brand." This description of a cheerful brand is conducive with the image that the world has of the Caribbean. Happiness, has long been woven into the narrative surrounding the Caribbean (Montero, 2011), and this narrative has been

⁸⁹ Note that the Caribbean Tourism Organisation is presently the sole organisation officially mandated to represent the Caribbean brand.

continuously shared by tourism agencies across the globe. In fact, it is even supported by empirical data which shows that as a region, Latin America and the Caribbean hold the second highest ratings for happiness worldwide (Helliwell et al., 2016).⁹⁰ Of course, the lived experiences of both nationals and the diaspora have also contributed to the region's reputation as a space that engenders positive emotions, thus allowing happiness and cheerfulness to become defining traits of Brand Caribbean.

Brand Caribbean was also described as an extremely vibrant brand by interviewees across all sectors. Speaking of the festival sector, Giselle explains: "It's exciting, it's colourful. It has a lot of vibrancy." Justin, an entrepreneur also touched on this describing Caribbean festival personality as such: "Vibrant....It so vibrant, it so colourful, it so diverse, it so eclectic". According to the Cambridge Dictionary (2016), vibrancy connotes excitement, enthusiasm and high energy, and the description proves fitting, as one fashion stakeholder explained that Caribbean fashion would be personified as a "Very outgoing, eclectic, fun, party girl". Throughout all the colourful descriptions given, the energy which Brand Caribbean exudes is evident, as is the fact that this vibrant energetic persona has become a significant part of the regional brand.

However, in contrast to its vibrancy, Brand Caribbean was also defined by its easy-going nature. As Neil explained, "We enjoy life and we are people who tend to be very relaxed about things. When you compare what's happening in other parts of the world and how people protest and object, we take things in stride." This relaxed style that has become somewhat emblematic of the region is also reflected in the region's approach to cultural production. As Nicholas explained:

⁹⁰ The World Happiness Report is an industry publication and it measures six core variables: "GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom to make life choices, generosity and freedom from corruption" (World Happiness Report 2016, p.14).

“I would say [its] carefree...The thing about the Caribbean is that it has so many different influences. Throughout the Caribbean there are so many things that influence the design that comes from here, whether it may be colonization, ancestry, any number of things. Yet it has a sort of carefree approach to how it interacts and how it is laid out and presents itself.” (Nicholas, Executive, Fashion Association of Trinidad and Tobago)

The seemingly easy way in which the various facets of Caribbean culture are woven together is one of the most interesting elements of the region’s cultural products. This seamless integration of different cultures, religions, histories and people, is further proof of the region’s carefree approach to both life and cultural production, and thus it is unsurprising that both have become defining traits for Brand Caribbean.

Brand Caribbean was also personified as humble, “easy-going and down to earth”. For example, in discussing the personality of reggae music, one interview described it saying:

“What persons would consider down to earth, I guess, because of the fact that reggae talks about the day to day life of people, and it is just really a voice that echoes that. And as a person I think it would be selfless in that regard, echoing the sentiments of the day to day life of people.” (Tamoya, Manager, Bob Marley Group of Companies, Jamaica)

The humility of Caribbean music is a well celebrated trait, particularly in the field of reggae where the music is unpretentious and its primary aim is to connect with the individual. The humility present in Caribbean music is not surprising given that many Caribbean artists have very modest beginnings and as such they make it their mission to create music for the popular audience. This unpretentiousness is also evident in other cultural activities, like carnival

J'ouvert celebrations⁹¹ where people take to the streets covered in mud, oil or paint, a celebration of the fact that everyone is equal in that moment. In a similar way the literature and imagery coming out of the region also celebrates the simple way of life that is cherished across the region. As a result, this essence of humility has become an important trait of Caribbean culture and by extension Brand Caribbean.

However, in quite a contrast, the personality of Brand Caribbean has also been described as proud and rebellious. In discussions with Paul, a music executive, he explained that from his perspective Caribbean music was “proud, rebellious and I was thinking to also add conservative”. The Caribbean brand is indeed a rebellious brand largely because a lot of the cultural practises and traditions of the region were forged out of a colonialist framework. For example Carnival evolved out of rebellion against former slave owners following the abolition of the slave trade (Pearse, 1956). Similarly, the region's indigenous music forms such as reggae and calypso emerged from the tensions of the time, serving as a means to critique the political systems and social injustices which occurred at the time. In this way, many of the Caribbean's cultural treasures have been borne out of battles and victories against oppressive systems and peoples. Thus a rebellious nature was a key driving force in the forging of the region's cultural identities, and has rightfully become synonymous with Brand Caribbean over the years.

Naturally the traits listed above do not represent an exhaustive list, however they do provide insight into the personality of Brand Caribbean, as judged by those who work most closely with the brand in a cultural context. However, defining brand personality remains a difficult task given the complexity of culture with its multiplicity of forms and its limitless number of stakeholders, who within the context of this thesis are drawn from varying national contexts. Furthermore, the fact that personality can vary, albeit slightly, from sector to sector, adds

⁹¹ Refer to Appendix D for a photograph depicting J'ouvert celebrations.

another layer of complexity to the difficult task of building a composite of Brand Caribbean's personality.

It is also interesting and important to note that interviewees did not attribute any negative characteristics to Brand Caribbean. This could be because an interview setting prompts strategic forgetting, where interviewees prefer to focus on the positive attributes associated with the brand so as to manage impressions. As they are all industry stakeholders, many of whom are responding in an official capacity, it is in their best interest to protect Brand Caribbean and this could explain the exceedingly positive review of Brand Caribbean's personality.

In conclusion, this section on defining Brand Caribbean demonstrates that it is in fact a composite of various elements. It illustrates how closely the brand is intertwined with the environment, landscape and climate of the region. It also demonstrates what a critical role the Caribbean lifestyle plays within Brand Caribbean, demonstrating that cultural products often embody this lifestyle. The significance of the brand experience is also highlighted, as it is evident that regional cultural products are intricately tied to the experience that surrounds them. This section also discusses the dominant personality traits of Brand Caribbean, an important discussion in light of the quest to understand the regional brand.

7.2 Exploring issues around Caribbeanness and authenticity

7.2.1 *Identifying the ‘Caribbeanness’ in Brand Caribbean*

In defining Brand Caribbean, the thesis sought to extrapolate what makes a cultural product distinctly Caribbean. Stemming from the previous discussion on Caribbeanness in Chapter Three, the goal was to understand how Caribbeanness is embodied in cultural goods. In talking with interviewees, the responses given varied greatly from sector to sector. For instance, in the music sector, some felt that the most distinctive feature of Caribbean music was simply its sound. As musician Christopher explains “I mean rhythm is integral, across the board whether its reggae or soca or what have you, rhythm is a defining character”. For Gerald, founder of one of Jamaica’s most popular music website, the melody was the core feature, “I think it’s the sound of it. Because if you listen to reggae there is a very distinctive sound of the instruments that they’re using”. For Neil, it was the construction of the music which made it uniquely Caribbean:

“Apart from the people who perform it, I think it’s how we perform it. When you think of Caribbean music, our rhythms are very much from our waist to our voice and you see that coming out. And the people who write music, the patterns and everything that they set, how they lay the tracks, it’s very much to do with who we are as a people.” (Neil, Marketing Professional, National Cultural Foundation Barbados)

Indeed, the musicality of Caribbean music and the way in which songs are constructed has become a distinguishing factor, making it easy for music aficionados to identify the geographic and cultural origin of the songs even without a label.

However, apart from the musicality, another key feature which distinguishes Caribbean music is the fact that it documents the Caribbean experience. Kwame explained:

“Maybe that’s one of the distinctive features of Caribbean music – Because through our music we tell the story of our lives. And calypso in particular has documented every aspect of, not only our personal lives, but every aspect of human civilisation. Every important moment in the history of humanity is documented through calypso. You know, I think it’s the only art form that really fulfils that kind of role in the world.” (Kwame, Calypsonian and Executive, Trinbago Unified Calypsonian’s Organisation)

Caribbean music serves as a time capsule of sorts, since the content reflects and documents sociocultural changes and defining moments. Calypso in particular has always been a means of reflecting on significant social events and critiquing the political mishaps of the past year. Similarly reggae has a long history of challenging social norms and raising consciousness surrounding the critical political issues which plague society (Waters, 1985). Even dancehall (an art form which is often criticised for its crassness), documents the language and slang that is representative of a particular time. Thus, one can claim that Caribbean music’s distinctiveness lies in its storytelling of the Caribbean experience.

In the regional festival sector, the distinctiveness here lies in the unmatched experience it offers. The experience of participating in Caribbean festivals is far removed from off-shoot festivals that take place across the globe. As Justin explains:

“I’ve harnessed all my energies into creating something that is interesting, that is truly Caribbean. Because really and truly I use a lot of what we have to make things work. I mean in the [United] States, you can’t jump up in the streets with your alcohol just like that. That’s a Caribbean thing. You ain’t going to get a fête from 2 am to 8 am in the morning in New York just so. It ain’t going to happen

like that. And those things are truly Caribbean, they're truly characteristic of the Caribbean.” (Justin, Founder, Regional entertainment company)

There is no doubt that Caribbean festivals afford consumers a unique experience, largely because of the region's intimate relationship with festivals. Caribbean festivals are not only huge economic earners but like most festivals they serve a psychological purpose (Maeng et al., 2016; Li and Petrick, 2006), acting as a 'release valve' for the Caribbean community. They are also highly valued expressions of regional cultural identity as “they make considerable contributions to the creation of collective and place identities, enhance the participants social and cultural capital and offer a wide variety of opportunities to engage in identity discourses” (Merkel, 2015, p. 16). Consequently, festivals remain highly revered by their societies and both the government and its peoples protect these institutions and work to ensure that they continue to maintain both the traditions and infrastructure that allow them to recreate these inimitable experiences.

However, while it is possible to identify these distinguishing features, several interviewees were quick to clarify that while cultural products have distinctive features, these features are not necessarily unique. As Jordan explained “You really can't invent a silhouette, you know, you can only bring your culture into it and put your little twist to it”. This statement highlights the importance of brand since brand is the distinguishing 'twist' that cultural products exhibit. Another interviewee Stella, endorses this view stressing:

“Nothing is exclusive to any one territory...You know, I don't think anything is unique. I think that what you can do in your branding is that you can bring out the essence of your culture.” (Stella, Veteran fashion designer, Trinidad)

Brand then works so as to take what may or may not be distinct features and weave them into a narrative that can connect with consumers. As Kwame, a musician, explained

“sometimes it’s difficult for me to identify Caribbean music, except from a sentimental or emotional point of view”, and this thesis proposes that it is this same sentimentality and emotional connection that brand taps into. As such, it can be argued that it is not just defining characteristics that make a cultural product distinctly Caribbean, but also the intangible emotional connections which are tied to it as well.

7.2.2 Defining Caribbean authenticity

Stemming from the discussion on the distinctiveness of Caribbean cultural products, the issue of authenticity arose. As discussed in Chapter Three, authenticity is a complex theoretical concept, however in this analysis it is used in the same fashion as it appears in everyday rhetoric, as this reflects the way in which interviewees used the term. Now while the section above identified some distinctive features of Brand Caribbean, the question still remains what is required for a cultural good to be characterised as authentically Caribbean? As Halcyon explained below, this debate has crept into public sector discourse:

“This notion of authenticity is a very important one. We were working for example on a craft campaign, looking at authentic Jamaican craft. And I remember, one major issue in the craft sector is how you define authentic. Is it authentic if all your inputs are imported and you are only utilising Jamaican labour? So this issue of authenticity, in terms of branding is a very important one. What is authentic, what is not? What is real and true to the spirit of what it is that you need to convey? But authenticity is also, from a sociological standpoint, also very difficult to define isn’t it?” (Entertainment Executive, Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment, Jamaica)

According to Levey (2015) cultural authenticity can be simply defined as “conforming to historically original or traditional cultural expressions, or otherwise displaying historical

continuity” (Levey, 2015, p.3). Still, it remains a complex topic because there are many different arguments for justifying the authenticity of a cultural product. First, there is the issue of authorship, as the identity of the creator has an indelible effect on a product, particularly within the field of cultural production. As such, a case can be made that a product be considered authentic solely because the author is from the Caribbean. However, this argument still creates a lot of divisiveness because it raises the challenge of deciding what qualifies someone as a ‘Caribbean’ creator. Do creators need to be legal nationals or must they have been raised in the region? What then of members of the Caribbean diaspora who have Caribbean roots and have lived amongst a Caribbean community and thus can rightfully claim to have been exposed to West Indian culture?

Furthermore, how can one address the issue of Caribbean creators who produce work that is not necessarily representative of the region? For instance, one interviewee used the example of Rihanna, the global music star who hails from Barbados, explaining that while “Rihanna is a Caribbean and Barbadian artist her music is distinctly American”. Rihanna is in fact a pop artist whose music is distinctly North American and does not draw on any of the region’s traditional musical styles. Cases such as this one highlight the fact that the correlation between being a Caribbean national and producing authentic Caribbean cultural products is not absolute. Apart from this, a cultural product’s authenticity also depends on the content and whether it is true representation or reflection of Caribbean culture. If it is, then do external factors such as where it is produced and the source of materials and labour used for production detract from its authenticity? Similarly, one can also question whether music, art or festivals produced outside the region by creators who have no discernible ties to the region can ever be considered authentically Caribbean in any respect.

The authenticity of Brand Caribbean is also coloured by the fact that it is a brand that has been tailored for the purpose of attracting international consumers. For example, while

discussing the strength of ‘Brand Barbados’, one interviewee – Lyn, clarified that while that national brand is strong, “their brand is very much a tourist brand”. The idea that some nation brands are solely tourist brands without any sort of authentic cultural input makes it possible to argue that authenticity can be eroded by tourist-centered branding campaigns, which may be the case in the Caribbean where a tourism organisation (The Caribbean Tourism Organisation) is the sole agency responsible for managing the Caribbean’s brand.

However, in debating the authenticity of cultural products, it may be best for judgment to be based on a spectrum given that authenticity is not an absolute value. As such, one must be mindful that for different actors with different agendas, definitions surrounding authenticity can shift. In fact, one can question whether brand can really ever be considered authentic given that it is a tool driven by a contrived communicative agenda. At any rate, acknowledging that nothing can truly be judged to be perfectly authentic, it is important that in discussions around authenticity, cultural goods should not be subjected to classification in the mutually exclusive categories of authentic or inauthentic. Instead, the focus should be on honouring the works which celebrate Caribbean culture with pure intentions.

Challenging the Caribbean Label

These discussions on defining what is authentically Caribbean also raised issues around labelling. Interestingly many Caribbean cultural producers expressed an aversion to labelling their goods as ‘Caribbean’. As fashion designer Annalise explained:

“...You see words like ‘local’ and ‘Caribbean’ I have a problem with it when people put it in front of the word designer. Because Oscar de la Renta has built such a name for himself – nobody says Caribbean designer Oscar de le Renta, it’s just designer. I believe an artist is an artist full stop. And I think when you put local designer so and so, all of a sudden you diminish what it is somebody does.

Because by saying local, for me the context is it's only relevant to this set of people here, this island, this whatever, and I don't like that. I really don't like that. So when people say Caribbean designer or local designer I don't have a problem with it, but I prefer you say designer from Trinidad, designer from the Caribbean, but don't make it the adjective of the word designer...Nothing wrong with being a Caribbean designer, I am Caribbean, I will never say I'm not Trinidadian, but is it necessary?" (Annalise, Fashion Designer, Trinidad)

Another interviewee echoed the same opinion saying that putting the 'Caribbean label on work is effectively 'pigeon-holing' the products. Now while brand is a tool that is meant to differentiate amongst similar products, pigeon-holing implies restriction. Indeed, it can be argued that labelling effectively limits the universality of goods and thus impacts their value in the global marketplace. Furthermore, it also raises the larger question of whether it is truly necessary to highlight the source of cultural goods, since many cultural products can be enjoyed independent of the contextualisation which a label offers.

This focus on authenticity and labelling is a result of a renewed interest in the 'local'. As discussed in Chapter Six, Caribbean people have been slowly working towards eradicating the idea that foreign goods are superior, a movement which has been supported by many grassroots 'Go Local' campaigns. However, as a consequence of this, many cultural producers are now shamed when their products are not constructed from entirely local materials or if production is done abroad. Speaking from her experience in the fashion sector Annalise explained:

"You end up doing things abroad and you're getting harassed for it or bashed from it because you're not locally produced, like this is some horrific thing. I don't have a problem if something is locally produced or not. You do what you can do with the resources you have. And if I can get it done, not necessarily cheaper, but

more cost effective, better quality and save time, I'm not going to beat up and harass myself because a Trinidadian didn't make it...What are you going to focus on, do you want your brand to be an international brand or are you more concerned about a Trinidadian manufacturing your clothes." (Annalise, Fashion Designer, Trinidad)

The pressure to produce locally and drive the local economy is coercing creators to make business decisions which are not necessarily prudent since they are pressured into working within a framework with limited resources. So while the idea of entirely locally produced goods is great in theory, in actuality the resultant social pressure which is placed on creators can be extremely restrictive. It is for this reason, as well as those listed above that the debates surrounding authenticity have come to play a significant role in the evolution of Brand Caribbean.

In conclusion this section on Caribbeanness illustrates the complexity of defining Brand Caribbean. It shows that while it is possible to identify some distinctive features of Caribbean products, it is brand that truly differentiates the region's cultural offerings on the international market. This section's discussion also examines the concept of authenticity in relation to Brand Caribbean, highlighting the contention that surrounds debates about authenticity and the implications that are attached to the Caribbean label.

7.3 Brand Caribbean: A composite of diverse national brands

RQ 4: What are the relationships between national brands, cultural identities and Brand Caribbean?

7.3.1 National identity and Brand Caribbean

It is impossible to critically analyse Brand Caribbean, without discussing one of its core features which is the fact that it is a composite of approximately fifteen national brands (within the context of this thesis). As such, it was understandable that when asked to discuss Brand Caribbean, the singular trait that was repeatedly highlighted was the brand's multi-nation composition and its subsequent diversity. As one public sector official explained:

“Our diversity should be our biggest selling point...In the Caribbean we have the opportunity to really demonstrate to the world what the real concept of creolisation is, and the real concept of what a melting pot is...In the Caribbean we are the melting pot. We are the first place where you have what you may call a Mulatto class of people, race of people. Where race is mixed. We represent the chain between, um, I would say the west and the east...We have people from Asia in the Caribbean, we have people from Europe in the Caribbean, we have people from South America, and of course our Caribbean people who are from Africa in the Caribbean. So we really are one of the greatest examples of a melting pot. And that's what we need to sell. We need to sell that to people.” (Neil, Marketing Professional, National Cultural Foundation Barbados)

Brand Caribbean's diversity is born out of the complex and varied histories which have shaped the Caribbean community. The diversity across race, ethnicity, language and art forms that is evident across the region presents an opportunity to give potential consumers inimitable cultural products. Consider that Brand Caribbean offers access to over thirty (30)

large festivals throughout the year, not including the smaller niche events which cater to nonmainstream tastes. It also offers a vast range of indigenous music that varies from island to island, not only in musicality but in the language and dialects reflected in the music. These subtle shifts as you move across the region are characteristic of the Caribbean and its cultural art forms. As Christopher explains:

“To me that’s the Caribbean story – we way different but yet very similar. There is so much we have in common. You go to any Caribbean island and you feel at home. Things are different, markedly different, they strike you as different the accents whatnot, but when you look at the people the way they move and think, if not your brother, it’s your cousin.” (Christopher, Artist – singer, writer, producer and director)

Like cousins, the islands are in many respects the same but yet different and it this tension that when manifested creatively makes Brand Caribbean distinct and sets it far apart from its global competitors.

However, while the diversity that comes from being a composite of many national brands is a unique selling point, it does have its drawbacks. The most glaring is that from a political standpoint it proves difficult to manage. At present the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO) remains the sole organisation responsible for Brand Caribbean, however as a tourism agency, its efforts are aligned with the leisure industry’s agenda and thus its brand initiatives are unilaterally geared towards increasing tourism revenue. Furthermore, while it would be expected that CARICOM’s culture arm would also be engaged in managing Brand Caribbean, this organisation remains ineffective to date.

Still, one of the greater challenges that Brand Caribbean faces is negotiating the merger of these various nation brands. As previously discussed in the Chapter Three, nation brands are

complex and they represent “the unique, multi-dimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all of its target audiences” (Dinnie, 2008, p.15). A nation’s brand is thus a reflection of the unique historical social and cultural elements that shape and define that society, as well as the challenges that affect it. As such, it is a given that nation branding will have a significant impact on the type of products, creative or otherwise which come out of that society. Integrating these distinct stories and the cultural products that have been birthed from them, is of course a challenging feat.

Merging these nation brands is also further complicated by the fact that the investment or value attached to nation branding differs greatly across the islands. As seen in this thesis’ policy chapter, while some territories like Jamaica and Barbados have been making strides, for others nations branding has yet to appear in any public or national discourse. Avril, an executive at The Caribbean Tourism Organisation summed up these disparities in a simple analogy:

“It’s like you could all be singing in a choir and you could all be given a white dress, but then you can go home and embellish yours. It’s the same white dress, it’s just the value that you’ve added to it.” (Avril, Marketing Executive, CTO)

The investment that nation’s make in their national brand is directly correlated to the strength of their brand. And of course the strength of these individual brands will also likely affect how much leverage the nation holds within the context of Brand Caribbean. At present, negotiating these discrepancies remains a challenge that impedes the development of Brand Caribbean.

Moving past the macro-view of Brand Caribbean, it is also important to understand the national identities which constitute it. As discussed in Chapter Three, national identity remains

a highly contested field, however it can be argued that national identity, be it real or imagined, is the cornerstone of a nation's brand, since it is out of this identity that a nation's brand is fashioned. The fact that Caribbean nations are struggling to define their identities is a fact that is well documented in academia, literature, music and various other cultural archives (Bolland, 2004; Nettleford, 2003; Taylor P., 2001). Developing a national identity is a slow process, and as Anthony, one of the founders of the Brand Jamaica campaign explained "the work of promoting the brand has been ongoing, I would say even before we got independence". However, despite having been decades in the making, national identity is still difficult to define. Take the example of Jamaica, the island that has most openly adopted the idea of formally investing in its national brand. When asked to describe this national brand, Halcyon defined it as both "an introvert and an extravert", saying:

"You know, it is almost schizophrenic in a way. And I'm saying schizophrenic in a very very nice way. There is this dynamism, but yet there is this part of it that is incredibly subdued...So it's in your face, it's out there, but it is also not! And not – for varying reasons. It's withdrawn because we have not, we haven't fully identified, we haven't fully defined who we are as a people. So in pushing the brand out there and in articulating the brand internationally, it moves, and that movement may or may not be a bad thing." (Halcyon, Entertainment Executive, Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment, Jamaica)

As is evidenced above, the Caribbean islands are still young and still evolving, and this process of self-discovery and identity formation, remains a gruelling and daunting, yet welcomed task.

This national struggle with identity of course plays a critical role in the regional creative economy. For example, consider that it is easy to discern the nationality of a cultural performer not only because of a tell-tale accent but also because their work usually contains the unique language or phrases that are tied to their islands. Likewise, literature celebrates the

distinctive characteristics and idiosyncrasies of the society in which the piece is set, in the same way in which a painting can reflect the physical environment of a particular island. In this way, most cultural work captures national values and celebrates the distinct features which define either the nation or the region. In fact, many creative projects are so entrenched in the national identity that it would be almost impossible to separate the two. As Ethel explains:

“Whether the thing is political, it’s cultural, it’s social, it’s financial, there’s this image that goes with Jamaica. Whatever the issue or subject matter is, there’s this image of the black green and gold, which is our flag colours.” (Ethel, Co-founder, National Jazz Festival, Jamaica)

Similarly, some national art forms such as Reggae and Soca, or musical instruments like the steel pan, cannot ever be stripped of their nation’s brand. Regardless of the contexts into which they are placed they are still glaringly Jamaican or Trinidadian. This of course has significant implications for Brand Caribbean because trying to align these diverse and overtly nationalised products into a streamlined entity will of course prove to be a continuous challenge.

7.3.2 The role of the people in Brand Caribbean

Patriotism and Brand Caribbean

In the midst of the process of identity construction, the deep seated patriotic feelings of Caribbean nationals also presents an additional challenge for Brand Caribbean. Across the region, each nation sees itself as distinctly different from its neighbours, and to some extent decidedly superior, and these beliefs stem from a strong sense of national pride and patriotic devotion to their nation. In discussing Brand Caribbean, Giselle, a marketing executive at the St. Lucia Tourist Board, described patriotism as a core issue stating: “Everybody is patriotic.

Everybody loves their own, their own country, pushing their own agenda, so I think it's really going to be hard". Indeed, there is a national pride that is almost unrivalled in the Caribbean and it touches every part of island life. In discussing this Lyn explains: "All of the islands have national pride. I mean we just had Independence Day celebrations here the last three days. And I mean everybody wore the colours of the flag and went out to party". More than just wearing national colours, national pride is about the intangible connection that people feel with their home nation. This devotion to the nation is a trait that is groomed from a young age and has even been institutionalised through acts such as the recital of the national anthem and the national pledge every single day throughout the formative schooling years.

Like identity, national pride and patriotic devotion have a large role to play in cultural production. However it has an even larger role to play in the distribution of cultural products since Caribbean nationals prefer to patronise creatives who are from their own island. For example, Giselle notes that in order to satisfy visitors to the St. Lucia Jazz Festival she has to invite performers from each of the islands explaining "when there is an artist that they can relate to, one of their own, they tend to come out in large numbers". The fact that each island must be represented in order to ensure the patronage of its nationals, shows how closely patriotism is linked to cultural distribution and consumption. Moreover, the fact that regional consumers are not always willing to support artists who do not have ties to their nation is a sign that this blind sense of patriotism may continue to derail the progress of Brand Caribbean.

It is clear that Brand Caribbean ultimately faces the demanding task of marrying distinct national values and identities and reflecting them in a cohesive Caribbean identity. However, the consistency that is required for such an undertaking is difficult to orchestrate when there are so many diverse parts of the whole. As Avril explains "When you look at the Caribbean brand, the message still can't be one message fits all...you know, it's a diverse brand and that

would have to be reflected in what we do.” Devising a holistic approach that allows all of these national brands to work alongside each other is a daunting mission, and one which is made even more difficult due to the deep rooted patriotism and longstanding competitive relationships among these island nations.

The role of the Diaspora

Apart from nationals at home, another core component of Brand Caribbean is the diaspora. Though official figures are difficult to source, estimates show that the Caribbean diaspora numbers approximately 10.7 million, with the largest populations concentrated in the US, UK and Canada (Caribbean Export Development Agency, 2016). The relationship between the diaspora and the region is a close one, particularly with respect to culture since they facilitate the movement of cultural goods across the globe as the primary overseas consumers (Gilroy, 1993). Moreover, the Caribbean diaspora is also responsible for the dispersion of Caribbean cultural practises, primarily through the multiple Caribbean festivals which they host in global cities such as London, Toronto and New York.

In this way, the diaspora has and remains critical to the success of Brand Caribbean. However, its role in propelling the brand is difficult to capture in a formal way, and as such may be often overlooked. Christopher explains this informal role saying:

“Well the diaspora is the natural connection to the, they’re like the hinterland then. They’re the natural link to the bigger market. They bring the brand with them and they rep [represent] that brand, which you see them doing. You go to Brooklyn for Labour Day, whew, so much Caribbean pride on display. You know, it’s incredible. And the young, this new generation of Trinis, Jamaicans and what not they proud of their heritage, they repping their heritage...And you see them in the city now, it’s not just in the Brooklyn backyard you know doing their thing. So

that's the natural sort of point of connection to the bigger market." (Christopher, Artist – singer, writer, producer and director)

Avril, also explained their role well saying simply "the diaspora is the brand ambassador". It is true that they are indeed responsible for representing the brand abroad and promoting the brand and their heritage through their daily interactions. In fact, one can argue that it is their spoken experiences that become the narratives that shape the brand's image in the minds of potential consumers abroad.

However it is easy to recognise that the connection between the Caribbean diaspora and home nations are waning. Paul, a music executive argues that the shift has been generational:

"The first generation of people who came over, in the you know, early 70s or 80s, you know there was a definite need to feel connected, right. They had family there, they would go back to Trinidad or Jamaica or what have you. And as it gets down two or three generations, they have an experience of it, but they're much more, you know, British people, Canadian people, American people, as far as what they relate to." (Paul, Marketing Executive, VP Records)

This disconnect between the diaspora and home has several implications for Brand Caribbean since they are by all accounts a critical channel through which the brand reaches across the globe.

Furthermore, it is clear that Caribbean nations have not been making any efforts to capitalise on the power of the diaspora. Even though stakeholders recognise its value and describe it as market that "is so powerful, and so untapped", there is no formal structure for maintaining ties with nationals abroad. In practise, the only formal outreach occurs when embassies hold meetings with nationals living abroad, however these meetings are short annual sittings which cannot really facilitate the development of strong relationships or exchanges. These lost

connections are important because not only is the diaspora a reflection of the nation, but the nations themselves can benefit from their life experiences. As Lyn explains:

“We go out into the diaspora and we get lost. I hope that’s what I’m trying to do with *She* [magazine], is to build awareness of all these people who have gone into the diaspora and have become really successful in their own right. But they still are from our home, and we need to know. We need them to come back home and enlighten some of the people on how it’s done.” (Lyn, Editor and Publisher, Caribbean fashion magazine)

It is clear then that governments have an obligation to try harder to maintain these connections with nationals abroad since they may be the ones who can help take the brand further based on their knowledge of the territories within which they now reside.

Furthermore, the home nations also need to work towards building a functioning framework for cultural exchange between the diaspora and the islands. For example, to date, most islands fail to take advantage of the opportunity to capitalise on the huge Caribbean festivals that take place across the globe. In talking with public sector officials all of them reported that their organisations were not actively involved in any of the international festivals, with the exception of Barbados. These islands are all missing out on an opportunity to tap into this huge potential consumer market by creating a link between these international events and the Caribbean festivals from which they have been derived. Investing in national contingents and sponsoring national performers to attend overseas festivals will not only add to the authenticity of the international festivals but will allow Brand Caribbean to access a larger stage. As such, as Halcyon explains, it remains critical “for us to always keep our finger on the pulse of our diaspora”, something which Caribbean nations are currently failing to do.

In conclusion, this section discusses the relationship between national identity and Brand Caribbean. It highlights the diversity that defines Brand Caribbean, as well as the benefits and challenges that emerge from the interweaving of various histories, nationalities, cultures, and races. This section also explores the role of people in Brand Caribbean, exploring the patriotism that drives nationals, and discussing the untapped potential of the Caribbean diaspora.

7.4 Regionalism and the competitive spirit

The leaders of the pack

As expected, given the multiplicity of stakeholders, Brand Caribbean does breed a competitive energy amongst its various national stakeholders. The root of this competitiveness can be traced to numerous sources, starting with the socio-political and economic structure of the region. The reality is that some nations have a wealth of resources to draw upon which have enabled their nation branding capacities, whilst others do not. These resources are not only monetary in nature, but include natural resources such as beautiful beaches, flora, wildlife and cultural products such as festivals which play a large part in building the nation's image. As Giselle explained: "every member state will want to be to the top of the pack...because somebody has to be first, somebody has to lead the pack". As such, it can be expected that resource-rich nations might naturally play a larger role in Brand Caribbean than their contemporaries, given the strength of their national brands. This discrepancy has long been a source of contention.

However, the Caribbean Tourism Organisation disputes the idea of this uneven playing field of sorts, as well as the idea that there are stronger or weaker national brands, instead

purporting that brand strength varies depending on the market it is being assessed within. As Avril explained:

“It depends on the metrics that you’re using and the market that you’re targeting. But the reality is that every single Caribbean tourism destination has a strong brand in at least one market, and if you take the same brand to another market they may be weak or unknown.” (Avril, Marketing Executive, CTO)

She offered the example of the island of Guadeloupe which while relatively unknown among Anglophone consumers, is a strong brand in the francophone market. With this approach, the value that individual nations can bring to Brand Caribbean cannot easily be calculated based on the economic leverage or socio-political influence of the territory.

However, this refusal to compare national brands and instead adopting the idea that they are all provide equal value, while admirable is easier said than done when previous regional initiatives have shown that certain territories like the three being discussed in this thesis, have historically retained more influence than others. However, as Neil argues “the fact that you may see Barbados, Trinidad and Jamaica as the [regional] pillars will not negate the contribution that can be made by the other countries of the Caribbean”. As such, whether or not there are discernible disparities in the power of nation brands within the context of Brand Caribbean, the contributions of all nations must be valued, without that value being influenced by comparisons with other territories.

Funding

Another factor that contributes to the competitiveness across the region is the issue of funding. To date, a key reason why Brand Caribbean has yet to receive institutional support is because of a lack of fiscal backing. Simply put, nations are not willing to invest a percentage of their already scarce resources into Brand Caribbean. As Isla, a regional publisher explained “I think that the CTO⁹² would like to do it, I just don’t think they’re getting any buy-in from the rest of the islands. So Jamaica doesn’t want to give the CTO 100,000 dollars to donate to marketing the Caribbean, they would prefer to keep that money to market Jamaica.” Avril, a marketing executive at the CTO echoed the same sentiment saying:

“The reality is when nations have a budget they prefer to spend that money on their specific destination to attract visitors to their specific country, rather than to the region. But at the same time it would be great benefit from having a regional marketing campaign but this would have to be funded by the region....Each country would put into the pot.” (Avril, Marketing Executive, CTO)

Unfortunately, from a competitive standpoint, investing money to drive Brand Caribbean does not necessarily translate into verifiable returns for individual nations. As one interviewee noted, this is grave concern particularly for smaller nations such as the Eastern Caribbean countries⁹³ that “feel completely dwarfed by the larger countries”. These nations rightly have no interest in funding a project which may simply serve to raise the profile of their larger regional competitors, and as such Brand Caribbean remains a low priority.

⁹² Caribbean Tourism Organisation

⁹³ The ‘Eastern Caribbean’ countries refer to a nine-member delegation of island states who share a single currency – the Eastern Caribbean Dollar.

Micro-level competitiveness

The competition that plagues Brand Caribbean is not just limited to a governing level, it also exists on the ground at a micro-level. The Caribbean is a competitive space by nature, in fact many creative sectors are driven by competition models. For example, where music production is concerned there are competitions like the Digicel Rising Star Show, which is funded by the region's top telecommunication provider and is dedicated to finding the region's next top artists. There are also regional shows such as the Soca Monarch competition in Trinidad and the People's Monarch in Barbados, held every year as at the height of the respective festival seasons across the islands. Similarly there are creative writing, visual art and music competitions held on both national and regional scales for school children and young adults. As such, it is common to use competitions to drive cultural development and incentivise participation, and thus the idea that competition can fuel creative production has been ingrained in the Caribbean for decades (Dudley, 2003).

Unsurprisingly this has translated into a very competitive market in which producers can sometimes be hesitant to share both knowledge and resources. This competitive energy becomes even more apparent when creators step outside of their local market. Justin, an entrepreneur, describes the difficulty of breaking into regional market saying:

“As I said I'm a regional brand, so I have been exploring the three pillars, Trinidad, Barbados and Jamaica in terms of doing events. And the reception I got coming into Jamaica was almost like I am an enemy. It was very difficult for me to do my first event there, but when I did I got the hearts of the people... Because they realised we are not about taking the pie, we are about increasing the pie.”
(Justin, Founder, Regional entertainment company)

His experience is not an isolated one, as many find it difficult to engage with consumers across the region. A misguided sense of nationalism, coupled with the mistrust of foreign competitors who are entering already small markets makes it difficult for cultural producers to succeed in regional markets. As a result, many prefer to remain in their local market or turn their attention towards the Americas, foregoing on the opportunities to build brands closer to home.

However, not all stakeholders see the competition that exists in the regional creative economy in a negative light. For example, Jordan believes that the competition can drive development:

“I think competitiveness is great. When you compete, you tend to excel because you’ve got to be one step ahead or one notch above. What I have a problem with is unethical competition, and we have a lot of that in the region. Unethical competition is not healthy, it doesn’t even help the person that’s being unethical. What most people think is that if I could get rid of him then I will prosper, and it’s not necessarily so. It’s just like any business you know. If there’s a cluster of businesses on a street, all the businesses will do better because more people will patronise. No one should want to stand alone because eventually you’ll burn yourself out anyway. So I have a serious challenge with unethical behaviour as it relates to anything to do with business in Trinidad and Tobago and the region.”

(Jordan, Founder and Director, National fashion show, Trinidad and Tobago)

As Justin says, competition can indeed be useful in forcing creatives to innovate and constantly work harder to secure success. This not only encourages personal development, but can also serve to further the region’s goals for cultural development. However, the negative consequences of the region’s competitive nature far outweigh the benefits, as it is this competitiveness which continues to stifle Brand Caribbean. According to the CTO, this competitive energy that exists can be overcome through proper management built upon a

practise of transparency. It was argued that if Brand Caribbean is managed in a coordinated fashion where stakeholders are able to clearly see the fruit of their investments, it would engender a collaborative spirit and goodwill amongst contributing territories. Similarly, if the Caribbean's nationals could adopt a strategy where a celebration of diversity replaced the competitive spirit, it could mark a turning point for the regional brand. Brand Caribbean truly has the ability to offer diverse cultural products and unique cultural fusions, all in such close proximity to each other, and this fantastic opportunity should be exploited and not stifled by competing agendas.

7.5 Regional integration and collaboration

Whilst there is a palpable competitive spirit, the Caribbean is a dichotomy of both competition and collaboration, as the region has long been attuned to the advantages of regional collaboration. It was in 1961 after Jamaica had announced their decision to withdraw from the West Indies Federation,⁹⁴ that Dr Eric Williams, the first prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago uttered the now infamous phrase “One from ten leaves nought”, reminding the region of the crippling effects that isolation held. Decades later, the Caribbean is still struggling to find common ground despite the creation of numerous regional organisations. This of course has serious implications for Brand Caribbean, particularly within the context of the creative industries, where many governments have failed to recognise the value of presenting a unified front. As Isla observes:

“I think it’s because they don’t see the bigger picture. I hate to say that. But I think they’re very small minded when it comes to this topic. And I think they’re standing – you know when you’re standing in the woods you don’t see the trees.

⁹⁴ The West Indies Federation, the first regional political body, was founded in 1958 and disbanded in 1962 following the withdrawal of Jamaica.

And I think every single island is in that position.” (Isla, Editor-in-Chief. Regional lifestyle magazine)

While advancements have been made in the field of trade and travel, there have been few efforts to work on a regional cultural identity.

However, for many stakeholders the advantage of a collaborative front is clear. As Giselle, a brand development executive stated: “I mean the more numbers you have, the more power you may possess. You can be stronger as a brand when you’re sold under one umbrella – there’s strength in numbers”. A collaborative effort would mean that creatives from across the region would have larger networks and a much more substantial pool of resources from which they can draw on. The merging of resources would also mean a great increase in the economic leverage that the region holds which will allow it to bargain more successfully within the global marketplace.

In fact, as another interviewee pointed out, most of the internationally funded initiatives in the region are geared towards pushing the region towards integration. Halcyon, explains:

“All of these European funding projects are really designed to bring the Caribbean together, because their argument is that by yourselves you’re all small. You need to come together as a block, just like the EU is now a block of 27. You Caribbean people need to be one big block so you can negotiate better because you have the strength of numbers. But we are hamstrung by our petty differences. And they are really petty. They are not insurmountable barriers. They’re not insurmountable at all.” (Halcyon, Entertainment Executive, Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment, Jamaica)

The reality is that it appears that external parties have recognised the value of regional integration, even before those within the region. Unburdened by the historical, social and

political challenges that the region has to contend with, transnational organisations are able to see the advantages of a unified Caribbean, and have invested in initiatives meant to advance that vision despite the self-crippling behaviour of Caribbean stakeholders.

Engendering a collaborative spirit

The issue then is how can the region move past its short-sightedness and work towards developing Brand Caribbean. For some the solution is as simple as focusing on the similarities the islands share, as opposed to the differences amongst them. As Lyn explains:

“The great thing about the Caribbean is that we speak one language, we like the same type of foods, we like the same type of music, we have the same environment. So I do think it can be done, but a lot of it stems down to a lack of will. We have been so divided in the Caribbean, and have been encouraged to work on our divisions, not what unites us. So I do think it would take a lot of work to get there, to develop one cohesive Caribbean brand. And I think we are doing that slowly. But we still have you know, Trinidadians not liking Jamaicans, Jamaicans not liking Trinidadians, you know.” (Lyn, Editor and Publisher, Caribbean fashion magazine)

The cultural similarities across the region are clear: a shared language, a shared lifestyle, a shared diet; a shared affectation for indigenous music which all echo the shared influences and histories of the islands. However, all of these are overshadowed by nationalistic ideals. Another interviewee echoed these sentiments saying: “Whether we recognise it or not, we’re one region and there’s an interconnectedness...I mean it’s a challenge, this sort of insularity of state nationhood versus the reality that we need to federate and work together on a certain level”. The responsibility then rests with national agencies, as well as interregional organisations such as CARICOM to create frameworks that allow for collaborative work by

way of legislation that can encourage cultural producers to travel easily, work across the islands, trade without restrictions and access funding which can be used for interregional projects that are not confined to a singular territory.

In addition to this, a core issue here seems to be changing the mind-set of Caribbean people. Community campaigns which can help reshape the public's views so that they can recognise both the region's shared livelihood, as well as the value of Brand Caribbean initiatives would also be a useful endeavour. As Neil, Marketing Officer at The National Cultural Foundation Barbados astutely pointed out "the idea of a Caribbean brand in the Caribbean may need to start at the grassroots level, where we no longer see our neighbours as someone or as people who we don't want in our country".

A small spark

Still, while Brand Caribbean can obviously use some institutional support, it must be noted that its development still continues in lieu of this. As the CTO's representative explains it just needs to be strengthened and institutionalised in order to reach its full potential:

"Even though it may not be as coordinated as we would like, the Caribbean does still stand shoulder to shoulder together. And many international trade show and events you go to, you'll see the Caribbean village. So, it's already happening, you know, we'd just like to see more and that'd be a greater return on investment for the Caribbean countries, but it's already happening." (Avril, Marketing Executive, CTO)

While institutional collaboration has been taking place, it is really the micro-level collaborations amongst cultural producers that are driving Brand Caribbean's development.

As Christopher explained:

“The cultural industries have been doing it. The only real collaboration beyond cricket and what not, happens in people connecting with each other music-wise, theatre-wise, dance-wise, sports wise. Because that’s where it’s happening. The politics is way behind. Way, way, way behind.”(Christopher, Artist – singer, writer, producer and director)

Caribbean creatives have given up waiting on governmental intervention. They have reached across the islands to form collaborations with other producers in their sectors and have been building Brand Caribbean for years. Whilst their efforts have not gone unnoticed, they have not had a significant impact because their advances are small scale and lack the support of both the public and the governments, both of which are needed if Brand Caribbean is to continue growing in both size and prominence within the global creative economy. Unfortunately, many industry stakeholders did not see the likelihood of this changing in the near future given that the many prejudices and political barriers that continue to derail both the brand and the regional creative economy presently remain unaddressed.

RQ 5: What role does Brand Caribbean play within the global creative economy?

7.6 Brand Caribbean in the global marketplace

Trying to define the role that Brand Caribbean plays within the global creative economy requires a multi-perspective approach. Of course, economists would suggest a monetary analysis to calculate the impact that Caribbean culture has on the global market. According to The International Federation of Authors and Composers Societies (CISAC) 2015 *Cultural Times* Report, estimates suggest that the Caribbean and Latin American (LAC) creative economy generates approximately 124 billion US dollars in revenue, which equates to about six percent (6%) of global revenue (CISAC, 2015). Admittedly these figures are not entirely applicable within the context of this thesis since the data includes Latin American countries which are not included within the scope of this research. Also given that the Latin American countries dwarf the Caribbean territories immensely, it can be assumed that of the 6% allotted to the LAC, they hold the larger share.

At any rate, it is a given that the Caribbean's creative economy represents less than 6% of the global market, and while this figure may not seem very large, it must be assessed with due consideration for the relatively small size of the region – only 16 million CARICOM nationals. In addition to this, it must also be noted that the Caribbean's astronomically high piracy rates, along with the lack of national statistical data would also skew the figures listed above. Thus these fiscal metrics cannot be the basis for analysing the region's contribution to the global creative economy. In fact this thesis would argue that there is little correlation between Brand Caribbean's fiscal revenue and its cultural and social contribution to the international market.

Consider for example the music industry, which is a prime example of how such a small brand can have a large influence. As described in the introductory chapter of this thesis, the

Caribbean has given the world numerous music genres, musical instruments and award winning artists and performers. However, aside from this innovation, the impact of Caribbean music remains far-reaching as it is continuously incorporated into popular music. As Christopher, an accomplished musician explains:

“We flavouring the music of the world. We are. Look at it, and we’ve been doing it for the last...The popular music of the world is being flavoured by the Caribbean. And the people that bringing the vibes are Caribbean people, from Rihanna to Nicki Minaj, they’re all over the place. It’s Caribbean people. We bringing the vibes, but it’s a flavour. The Americans, particularly the Americans, they are not as accepting or as open to other people’s expressions. So you always sort of have to meet them on their terms, and flavour it to their ears.”

(Christopher, Artist – singer, writer, producer and director)

As such, while Caribbean music may not always top international charts, elements of it are evident in many international hits. Gerald, founder of a popular music website, relays his observations saying “Because if you notice they have started to take influences from the Caribbean music. They’ve started to use words that we use, and they don’t know what they mean, but it brings a different element to their music.” This common practise of using Caribbean elements to enhance global cultural products is further proof that Caribbean culture has made a name for itself on the global market.

In a similar way, Caribbean festivals have traversed the globe having paved the way for several international Carnivals. Due in large part to the Caribbean diaspora, several mega-events world-wide are a celebration of Caribbean culture, with the music, the costumes, the food and the revelry all distinctly Caribbean. The design and organisation of these festivals are also replicas of what takes place across the islands. In fact, in April 2014, due to heavy demand the

Trinidad and Tobago government created a Carnival blueprint⁹⁵ document that outlines the intricacies of the local carnival and made it accessible online for those who are involved in re-creating Carnival events overseas. Creating such a document was a means not only of patenting the Carnival, but also a way to ensure that Caribbean carnivals can continue to exist and thrive on the global market.

However, it is important to note that the influence of Caribbean culture on a global scale changes from sector to sector. While some cultural forms such as music, festivals and even literature can be considered influential, other burgeoning sectors like fashion have yet to attain that level of influence. In talking with fashion industry stakeholders many agreed that the region has yet to establish a place on the global market. According to fashion designer Annalise:

“We have a very very small role if any at all. I mean Trinidad on the international stage, and this is my point of view having lived in Europe – nobody really cares whether we’re there or not there...I know that sounds horrible but I’m being honest. It comes back to business mind and business strategy, I think our foundation rocks have been too shaky to really build anything of lasting impression. Right now it’s sad because we’ve wasted a lot of time because we’re playing catch-up with an international industry that is decades ahead of us. Literally we have to break everything down to the core to build it back up again, to have some kind of international presence as Trinidad or as the Caribbean.”
(Annalise, Fashion Designer, Trinidad)

As such, it is clear that the weight of the Caribbean’s presence within the global creative economy varies substantially dependent upon the cultural sector being discussed. While sectors like fashion may not have much global presence, others like music, festivals and sport

⁹⁵ See Appendix K for a copy of the Blueprint’s Table of Contents which illustrates the breadth of topics the document addresses.

have an influential role on the global market. Still, what is evident is that the region's cumulative influence across a variety of art forms cannot be challenged or undermined, as it is clear that the Caribbean's cultural influence is far-reaching.

7.7 Exploring brand success

7.7.1 Defining brand success

While the Caribbean has established itself on the global creative market, it still remains to be seen whether this constitutes success. Success is a difficult word to define, particularly within the realm of culture. Much like value, the success of a cultural product cannot be limited to monetary calculations, but should also reflect its personal and social impact. Furthermore, as success is a subjective term, its definition shifts dependent on the individual conducting the appraisal. Therefore what one industry stakeholder considers success differs greatly from that of another, and these differences must be acknowledged when evaluating brand.

Nonetheless, this research uncovered an interesting caveat to success, which is that success is often defined as amassing accomplishments outside of the region. As Paul, a music executive explained:

“My experience during my time at VP has been that one of the pivotal things for Caribbean music, or particularly reggae is getting out beyond the Caribbean and getting into other countries, crossover, or you know, making a bigger record internationally.” (Paul, Marketing Executive, VP Records)

The common view is that while cultural producers may have attained a level of success within their island or within the region, many do not consider this ‘real’ success. The primary goal is to make it on to a larger stage outside of the Caribbean. This idea that local success is not truly success harks back to many of the issues addressed in section 6.5 on the way in which

the region's colonialist history, coupled with modern day Americanisation, has shaped the way nationals appraise local goods, spaces and creators.

Of course it is normal for producers to pursue international success, as all creators want their work to be limitless in terms of reach and exposure. However this obsession with international success raises the question as to why then do artists sometimes bypass regional markets? Some may argue that it is merely because of market size. As celebrated fashion designer Stella explains:

“You can't be successful if you can only compete in Trinidad. You know, Trinidad is non-existent, it is so small, it doesn't make sense. 1.5 million people and you have about four hundred designers. So really, you only have about three consumers per designer...So, when you look at the scale, you know, you have to look at the whole world as your market and that way you can then produce in the thousands, and that is how it makes sense. It does not make sense if you have to produce one, one, one.” (Stella, Veteran fashion designer, Trinidad)

The idea that success is only attainable outside of the region on the basis of economies of scale principles is a valid explanation. However, with the cumulative population of the Caribbean numbering in excess of 16 million for CARICOM countries and 44 million if non-CARICOM members the likes of Cuba and the Dominican Republic are included, the region does provide a robust market. This market is more than adequate to support the region's designers, especially considering the fact that many cultural producers do not yet have the means for mass production of goods.

This points to the idea that the root of this drive for international success is not purely financial feasibility. Some, like Rita, an executive at the Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism in Trinidad and Tobago suggests that it is due to the remnants of colonialist ideals that have

been deeply ingrained in the Caribbean psyche. In discussing the local government initiatives which fund Caribbean artists to go to American festivals, she criticises the ways in which the Caribbean underestimates the local market and recalls that “everyone wants to go to America”. Indeed, the regional cultural industry has put the American market on a pedestal – it has become the holy grail of success, and achieving success within the Caribbean framework is simply not good enough.

The fact that Caribbean success is defined as success outside the context of the region has grave implications for Brand Caribbean since this is one of the reasons why Brand Caribbean initiatives focus on building the brand outside the region, as opposed to within the region as well. To date there are no campaigns which focus on getting Caribbean nationals to accept and consciously contribute to building Brand Caribbean. As public official Rita advises “we could sell to the world, but we’ve first got to sell it to ourselves”, however since the Caribbean does not recognise the potential of its own market, the Caribbean brand is not buoyed by the support of its own people.

In addition to this, these skewed definitions of success impact how stakeholders assess Brand Caribbean’s performance within the global creative marketplace. The question can be asked – Is Brand Caribbean already successful given its resources? If the common practise is to look to the outside then comparisons with global cultural products which exist on a distinctly larger scale can affect how the region’s success is perceived. For example, it would be futile to compare the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival, the largest in the region to that which takes place in Brazil, not only because they are markedly distinct in terms of style and form, but also just because of sheer size. Thus, one could argue that the Caribbean carnival is already as successful as it can possibly be.

This claim could also be made for other industries. In discussions, Lyn, a fashion industry stakeholder warns against visions of grandeur affecting the valuation of local cultural products. Referencing Caribbean fashion she talks of the need to be more competitive but clarifies “I’m not saying competitive with the US, or you know Paris, I mean we will never be there, not within the next ten years, I don’t think”. Ultimately, it is important that stakeholders recognise that understanding the limitations of Brand Caribbean remains critical to accurately evaluating its performance and successes. The region has proven that it can succeed in the global creative marketplace, however, greater credit should be given especially considering the relative scale of the region and what it has accomplished thus far.

7.7.2 Discussing the “It sells itself” concept

In discussing ideas around success, one common theme which kept surfacing was the idea that Brand Caribbean sells itself. The idea that a product or service ‘sells itself’ means that it is of such quality that consumers are willing to purchase it without heavy deliberation. Interestingly, this common and colloquial phrase seemed to have a very real impact on the behaviour of cultural stakeholders across the region, regardless of their particular sector. For example, in talking with Kerwin, an executive at the National Carnival Commission in Trinidad, he explained that “It’s a unique event our Carnival. We don’t have to do much marketing really. You just have to see it and it becomes infectious and you want to be part of it”. In a similar way, Ethel of Jamaica talks of reggae music saying “The music sells itself. The music has always sold itself. Government has never really had to go out and try to sell the music, the music was always selling itself from day one.”

The idea that Caribbean cultural products sell themselves seems to stem from several sources. Firstly, many believe that the region’s cultural products are innately special and that their value

is so undeniable that they do not need to invest resources into winning consumers. For example, when Ethel spoke of reggae music she said:

“I think also, the religious aspect, the spirituality of it was very affecting, you know, for people generally. Because people everywhere bought into it because of the spirituality, and the need, the kind of humanistic approach that was there. And also because it was about human rights, there was a political aspect to it as well. And so all of these things made it attractive to people everywhere who were facing similar issue. Not just our Caribbean diaspora, but marginalised people everywhere. There was a fight going on in South Africa as you know, and Jamaican reggae was very very important in that struggle there, because the language of the music was all about human rights, and political rights, and social rights and justice. And so that is what I think was the big thing that made reggae so, so powerful in terms of its effect on the rest of the world.” (Ethel, Co-founder, National Jazz Festival, Jamaica)

The Caribbean shifts between canonizing and dismissing cultural products, and in the case of reggae, it has been put on a pedestal. Consequently, locals take great pride in the quality of this art form and regard it in such high esteem that they truly believe that its value is easily discernible and as such they need not do much to entice potential consumers.

Another reason why many believe Caribbean cultural products sell themselves is because regional culture has always enjoyed ad hoc success. The Caribbean portfolio remains a composite of hits and misses and thus it is difficult to ascertain why certain cultural goods become global successes while others seem to falter. For example, consider that in the field of music, many artists who have topped international charts were previously unknown both locally and on a global scale, and many in fact often become ‘one-hit wonders’. Similarly, some islands like Trinidad and Barbados have been able to develop strong festival brands

while others have not. The fact that the region has been unable to create a formula for success means successes have been attributed to chance and in fact, many nations have adopted an approach where they simply throw their cultural goods on the market and wait to see which of them flourishes.

Additionally, it is important to note that in terms of culture, to date Brand Caribbean has been constructed based on individual cultural successes, and not due to any government sanctioned initiatives. One can again refer to the aforementioned Bob Marley case which illustrates the fact that local governments are unwilling to make any significant investment in even the most high-profile and successful brands. This type of inaction makes it increasingly clear that governments believe that they do not have to invest in Brand Caribbean because they can and have always been able to capitalise on the personal success of the region's creatives thus far. In the long run, this passive approach towards cultural distribution and brand management can only serve to limit the region's reach and ultimately stunt the regional creative economy's development.

Conclusion

This chapter seeks to develop a greater understanding of Brand Caribbean within the context of the creative economy. The first section addresses RQ 3: *What is "Brand Caribbean", as defined within the global creative economy framework?* Section 7.1 begins by defining Brand Caribbean, first highlighting the intimate relationship between the brand and the Caribbean environment. It deconstructs the value that the physical space brings to Brand Caribbean, and discusses the way in which cultural producers have been incorporating physical space, heritage sites and imagery into their brand offering. The chapter also explores the way in which core factors like the climate shape cultural production, further illustrating the fact that the environment is not only the region's distinguishing feature, but that it plays a chief role in creative expression. To

date, it appears that while the region has long recognised and relied on the value of the physical landscape within the context of tourism and even tradable natural resources, it has failed to explore the role that the environment plays in alternative national sectors. This thesis represents a step towards understanding the role of the physical in the regional brand. In fact, one of the ideas discussed in this chapter was the fact that some art forms and cultural products are inextricably bound to the Caribbean space and cannot escape being contextualised by it. In light of these claims, the physical landscape and its role within the creative economy needs to be further assessed so that opportunities for fully utilising the landscape can be capitalised and ultimately used to drive the regional creative economy's brand development.

Section 7.1 also discusses the idea that Brand Caribbean is an articulation of the Caribbean lifestyle. It illustrates that this lifestyle is diverse and continuously evolving, and that cultural producers have been incorporating this lifestyle into their brand experience. This section also uncovers some of Brand Caribbean's core personality traits, namely its cheerfulness, vibrancy, easy-going manner, humility and rebelliousness. It is important to note here again, that much like brand, there is an inherent diversity in the way in which Brand Caribbean is interpreted and defined by those across the creative economy. It is also critical to understand that Brand Caribbean is being defined here within the context of the creative economy, and that within other national sectors and frameworks, Brand Caribbean is likely to take on other forms. As Brand Caribbean develops, one of the larger challenges that will be faced within the region is agreeing upon a consensus for the regional brand, and this consensus must occur on not only on a national and regional level, but also on a sectoral level. The challenges implicit in this however are many, and are discussed in detail in this thesis' conclusion chapter.

Section 7.2 of this chapter explores the theme of Caribbeanness, discussing what makes Caribbean cultural products uniquely Caribbean. It highlights some elements such as the

musicality, the penchant for storytelling and the uniqueness of Caribbean festival formats as distinctive elements, yet it argues that brand is ultimately the core factor which distinguishes a cultural product. In line with the above, section 7.2 also addresses the notion of authenticity in relation to brand, discussing ideas around what it means and how it can be assessed. The section also touches on the implications that come with that attaching the Caribbean label to cultural products, debating whether this label can be limiting or not. While some cultural producers expressed that the Caribbean label was unnecessarily restricting, in light of this thesis development of the concept of the metabrand, it is more likely that the Caribbean label is an unsung hero, augmenting and contextualising the region's cultural products. It is now up to the region to further develop the brand behind this label so that what Caribbeanness means and how it is represented in the region's cultural products, is better understood both within and outside the region.

Section 7.3 to 7.5 address *RQ 4: What are the relationships between national brands, cultural identities and Brand Caribbean?* Section 7.3 begins by acknowledging the fact that Brand Caribbean is a composite of multiple national brands. It discusses the implications of this highlighting the strength that this diversity offers, but also noting the challenges with regards to political structures, brand management and issues around funding. Managing the multiplicity of national brands that constitute Brand Caribbean is one of the larger challenges that the regional brand faces. The difficulties stem not only from the absence or inefficiency of structural, political and economic frameworks for collaboration, but also from a sociocultural perspective. As this section has illustrated, as young nations, national identities are still developing making it difficult to concretise a regional brand identity. Given these many challenges, the potentiality of the region to successfully manage a regional brand remains dubious.

In discussing the above, section 7.3 also examines the role of the people in Brand Caribbean. It first discusses the role of the nationals, focusing specifically on the patriotic values which run deep and illustrating how they affect cultural distribution and consumption throughout the region. It then explores the role of the diaspora, looking at their significance as cultural ambassadors and consumers. It also discusses the lack of frameworks for capitalising on the ability of the diaspora to extend Brand Caribbean's market. To date, discussion on brand often centre on stakeholders, be they government, distributors or private artisans. While this thesis did focus on stakeholder narratives, it does still recognise that a nation brand must be built and supported by the people. As Brand Caribbean moves forwards, it is necessary that the powers that be incorporate the people who have a connection to the brand into the brand development process, as it is these people who will become responsible for delivering on the brand promises and sharing the brand across the globe.

Section 7.4 of this chapter examines the concept of regionalism and the competitive spirit that impedes it. It looks at both the tensions between smaller and larger islands, as well as the micro-level competitiveness which cultural producers face in the creative economy. Conversely, Section 7.5 then explores the notion of regional integration, discussing the value to be gained from a collaborative brand initiative, and noting that many international funding initiatives are steering the Caribbean towards this end. The juxtaposition of these two sections reinforces the fact that the Caribbean is a complex space characterised by both a desire to collaborate and a keen appreciation of the fact that one's collaborator is also one's competitor. While regional initiatives continuously underperform, this section suggests that the core issue may be deeper than usually acknowledged and that engendering collaboration requires changing the mind-set of the national populace. Tackling and tempering the competitive nature that pervades the region lies in getting nationals and governments alike to appreciate

the region's shared history so that region can finally envisage itself as a collective – a vision that is necessary for the success of a collaborative initiative the likes of Brand Caribbean.

The final portion of the chapter looks at *RQ 5: What role does Brand Caribbean play within the global creative economy?* In exploring this role, Section 7.6 argues that using economics-based metrics would not be applicable and that alternatively the focus should be on what the chapter demonstrates as the manifold cultural contributions of the region. While it is difficult to introduce a sociocultural assessment of value in a context which values economics-based analyses, the region needs to alter its metrics for the creative economy, so that it can truly acknowledge and celebrate the mammoth contributions that such tiny nations have given to the global economy. Within these new assessment frameworks, as this chapter has illustrated, it is also important to recognise that Brand Caribbean's role on the international market varies significantly from sector to sector. In developing a plan for Brand Caribbean, it is critical to take stock of the varying strengths of creative sectors, so that each sector is managed in such a way that its strengths can be celebrated and its weaknesses tackled through sector-specific policy and practises.

Finally, section 7.7 discusses the notion of brand success, looking at how it is defined in the Caribbean context. It uncovers that success is only highly valued when it is attained outside of the region, with an overemphasis on succeeding in the American market. This valorisation of the American market is of course the result of both the region's proximity to the United States and an overexposure to American media. However, the practise of continuously looking outside the region for success harkens further back to the region's colonial past. This history has resulted in a region which lacks cultural confidence and significantly undervalues its cultural contributions, and tackling this is understandably a long and arduous process that will need to be addressed over time.

In these discussions around success, the chapter also questions whether the potentiality of Brand Caribbean is over-estimated given the resources and size of the region. As a small region, in a world in which globalisation has removed barriers to access and created a competitive global market, the region must ensure that its plans for Brand Caribbean are realistic and driven by objective and achievable goals. Similarly, after examining the idea that Brand Caribbean sells itself and reflecting on the region's ad hoc success, the passivity of the region in terms of cultural distribution is also cause for concern. Ultimately, it is evident that the region needs to adopt a more active approach to both assessing and managing Brand Caribbean, so that it can truly realise its full potential.

In light of having discussed both the role of brand in the regional creative economy in Chapter Six, and Chapter Seven's analysis of Brand Caribbean, the following chapter presents the conclusions drawn from this thesis and explores the implications for future regional policy and research.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

This thesis is the first major research project to explore brand within the context of the Caribbean creative economy. It focuses on three of the region's core creative sectors: music, fashion and festivals, and draws on data from three CARICOM nations – Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, with the aim of responding to five (5) core research questions:

RQ 1: How is brand understood, constructed and used by cultural producers within the Caribbean creative economy?

RQ 2: How does brand influence the dynamics of the Caribbean creative economy?

RQ 3: What is the 'Brand Caribbean', as defined within a global creative economy framework?

RQ 4: What are the relationships between national brands, cultural identities and Brand Caribbean?

RQ 5: What role does Brand Caribbean play within the global creative economy?

In exploring the workings of the regional creative economy and highlighting new frameworks, such as the metabrand, this research illustrates brand's critical and strategic role with regards to cultural production, distribution and consumption, and also highlights its influence with respect to creative production and the imbue ment of value. The thesis is also the first to examine the concept of Brand Caribbean, defining it and exploring the myriad of challenges and implications associated with a regional brand. In the end, this thesis illustrates both the value that brand and Brand Caribbean can offer to the regional creative economy, and demonstrates that brand represents an avenue through which the regional creative economy can flourish and ultimately negotiate a stronger position within the global creative marketplace. This final chapter will now explore some of the conclusions that have emerged

out of this thesis, as well as discuss the implications for further research across the Caribbean creative economy.

8.1 Conclusions about brand in the Caribbean creative economy

Defining Brand

One of the first conclusions that can be drawn from this thesis is the fact that regional industry stakeholders do not have a coherent or unitary understanding of brand. As discussed in Chapter Six, there are varying interpretations regarding the nature of brand and its utility within the creative economy, with brand being conceptualised as a ubiquitous component of cultural production, a means through which to infuse cultural identity into a piece of work and a tool for commerce. Brand was also found to be manifested in a multiplicity of ways – through language, artistic expression and people. However, the thesis also illustrated that there is a narrow interpretation of what brand represents. In fact, Chapter Six reflected heavily on the fact that brand has become an industry ‘buzzword’, meaning that its appearance in public discourse is primarily due to its perceived trendiness, as opposed to an understanding of the potential utility of brand within the creative economy.

The diversity of views expressed above illustrates that there is a clear lack of consensus around brand, and this lack of accord is a core reason behind why brand remains a problematic entity in the regional creative economy. This is further complicated by the fact that this clear lack of consensus exists on sectoral, national and regional levels. On a sectoral level, it is clear that while brand has become popularised, there is a sense of conceptual confusion amongst stakeholders as brand is not fully understood and is in fact often conflated with marketing, advertising and public relations perspectives. Moving up to a national level, there is then a gross incongruity between a commercial or marketing based approach to

brand, and an alternative governance based perspective that sees brand as a means for developing national identity and furthering national development. On a regional level, there are of course added complexities given the multiplicity of economic, political and sociocultural frameworks that need to be merged.

In light of all the above, this thesis can conclude that the likelihood of developing a consensus around brand is very far off for the region. It is for this reason that this thesis suggests that brand must be viewed as multifaceted leaving room for it to be interpreted in a multiplicity of ways. Within this thesis brand represents the new currency within the global symbolic economy; it represents the most visible dimension of symbolic exchange; it is a linguistic and aesthetic medium through which identity is imbued in cultural products; it is a commercial tool that facilitates differentiation and market organisation; and it is also a means through which nations can define their sociocultural distinctiveness and negotiate a stronger global position. As these multiple definitions illustrate, there is a diversity and openness that is inherently woven into brand, and this openness must be reflected in the discussion and policy discourse around brand if the region is to use brand to help the creative economy function at an optimal level.

Brand across creative sectors

Another fundamental issue that was discussed during this research is the distinct way that brands are built across the regional creative economy. Chapter Six of this thesis revealed that there are three core approaches to brand-building across the region's creative industries – innovation, strategic growth and the client-centric approach. The first approach is forged through trial and error, the second through a carefully controlled strategy driven plan, and the final approach reflects a strategy where creative production is driven by the needs or desires of the consumer, as interpreted by the cultural producer. While this thesis identified these

three core approaches, it also revealed that brand-building varies dependent on the creative sector. For example, it was discovered that the unique structure of the music industry (as one that is dependent on live music and driven by the festival circuit), informs the way in which brands develop, as brand is only formally addressed after some measure of commercial success has been attained. It was also found that some sectors, like theatre, and some cultural products like the steel pan and reggae have an inherent and ‘natural’ brand. However, in contrast, the thesis also discussed the fact that many cultural producers felt that there was no discernible difference in the way in which brand works across the creative sectors, with some even expressing the belief that brand in the cultural sector is no different from that of other commercial sectors.

The data presented above raises two core issues. The first issue is that brand evidently operates distinctly in the regional context, where some cultural sectors and their products are so closely tied to the national cultural identity that they are intrinsically branded. As the evidence has shown, the distinct structure that characterises the Caribbean creative economy has created a unique space within which brand must operate. Unfortunately as this thesis demonstrated in Chapter Five, both national and regional cultural policy often overlook the creative industries as these sectors offer little political leverage. What this means is that the creative economy has not benefited from sector-specific policy or legislation that has been tailored for the challenges that these industries face, or the unique conditions linked to the Caribbean context. As such, this research can conclude that it is unlikely that brand can truly make an impact in the regional creative economy until governments create legislation and policy frameworks that respond to the distinct idiosyncrasies of local creative sectors.

The second core issue raised is that the data showed that many cultural producers felt that there was no discernible difference in the way in which brand works across the creative sectors, with some even expressing the belief that brand in the cultural sector is no different

from that of other commercial sectors. This dominant opinion suggests that not only is brand the subject of a narrow interpretation resulting in a gross underestimation of its scope and value, but it also indicates that for many regional cultural producers, the cultural sector is simply regarded as just another national commerce-driven sector. This revelation that some regional industry stakeholders overlook the symbolic value that is present across the creative economy reinforces this thesis' earlier claims that the sociocultural value and contributions of the creative economy remain unrecognised. One can only hope that as creative economy becomes a topic of discussion amidst the region's aims to diversify national economies, the sociocultural benefits aligned with the creative sectors become more recognised and ultimately valued.

Brand Practice

This thesis also examined the ways in which brand strategy was applied throughout the creative economy in section 6.3 on brand practise. Discussions with cultural producers revealed that brand has become a defensive tool that is used as a means of protection for local cultural goods whose global distribution is not favourably benefiting the regional economy. The fact that brand has become a means of cultural protection illustrates the fact that the Caribbean is truly in a precarious position. Owing to many factors including the region's proximity to the US, global flows facilitated by technological advancements and the movement of the diaspora, Caribbean cultural products have been moving across the globe uninhibited making exploitation by external parties commonplace. However, apart from this, brand's use as a defence mechanism also implies that to date the region has been incapable or simply unwilling to protect its own. As discussed in the thesis' analysis chapters national and regional policies are very vague and this lack of clarity has resulted in inefficacy and inaction across all stakeholder bodies. In fact, as discussed in section 5.3 on brand guidance, many local institutions are guided by unspoken rules and tacit knowledge, as opposed to clear

actionable guidelines which can improve the consistency of the national and regional initiatives. Consequently, at present the region's creative economy is an aggregation of informal frameworks leaving cultural products exposed to exploitation. Of course, this situation need to be remedied urgently, and as this research has shown aggressive and cohesive brand management facilitated through institutionalised guidelines and structures would allow the region to better protect its cultural assets.

This research on brand practise also uncovered that the Caribbean has a distinct strategic framework that is facilitated by the presence of what this thesis has labelled as the metabrand. What is distinct about metabrands, is that they are unowned entities that exist somewhat independently devoid of brand management per se. This thesis has argued that regional cultural products are irrevocably tied to metabrands such as Carnival and reggae, as they help contextualise them and grant them access to the global market. The creation of the metabrand is arguably one of this thesis' most important findings as it offers a new framework within which to contextualise regional cultural production and distribution. Introducing the metabrand into cultural policy discourse can allow the region to reconceptualise how brand works within the Caribbean and can inform how brand management and strategy should be structured so as to adapt to the distinct context of a space dominated by metabrands.

Discussions around Creativity and Value

This research also explored the relationship between brand and creativity. Section 6.4 revealed that creativity has an almost mythical place in the Caribbean narrative and that it is highly treasured by both creators and policy-makers alike. The research also showed that creativity is heavily shaped by the brand expectations that both foreigners and cultural producers place on their work. These brand expectations were found to be both restrictive, where creators felt pigeon-holed, yet supportive, where creators have a well-known aesthetic or sound upon

which a brand can be built. The thesis also revealed that creativity is also influenced by the strategic commerce-driven decisions that cultural producers must make in order to sustain their businesses. In discussing the relationship between brand and creativity this research not only offers new insight into the regional creative economy but also lays the groundwork for future discussions around the level of control regional cultural producers currently hold over their creative expression.

This thesis also examined the relationship between brand and value, exploring different perspectives on value and the unique challenges of navigating cultural exchange in an economy where the public believes certain cultural products, like music, should be free. In discussing value, one of the core arguments raised was that while the region's governing bodies claim to value both creativity and the creative economy, the policy frameworks which exist across the region belie these claims. As industry stakeholders repeatedly expressed during this research, the proof lies in the fact that the creative sectors are continuously under-funded. This funding crisis is also further compounded by the fact that national agencies usually channel their funds towards flashier initiatives which can afford the agency political capital, as opposed to investing in initiatives that can build more sustainable creative sectors and create stronger sector brands.

Apart from funding, as the thesis has also illustrated regional governments have also neglected to afford the creative sectors policy support in the form of the tax breaks and incentives that are given to the region's other traditional income sectors. Furthermore, governments have also failed to develop the necessary infrastructure to support the creative economy. At present, the regional creative economy can still be classified as an emerging industry, in light of the fact that there are severe gaps along the value chain. Regional governments have yet to take steps to fill these gaps, by introducing expedient measures the likes of training for under-manned sectors, incentivising investment in production-related fields and reducing imports on

materials thereby eliminating the need to foreign production which of course funnels revenue away from the region. Given that no initiatives have been taken to make the regional creative economy more competitive, one must conclude that at present regional governments still do not recognise the value that their creative sectors can contribute to the national economy.

However, moving past the governmental perspective, this research also touched on value from the perspective of the public. This thesis argued that the region's colonialist history had a significant role to play in the way in which brand value is imbued in cultural products. Having demonstrated the disparity in the assignment of value between foreign and local cultural goods and services, the thesis showed that the remnants of colonialist imperialism which still enchain the region has resulted in an absence of cultural confidence, which has of course been reflected in regional cultural consumption practices. As such, one can conclude that within the context of the creative economy, Caribbean people need to be taught to value their heritage, art forms and cultural products, and ultimately develop cultural confidence. As such, the Caribbean needs to work towards dismantling the colonialist framework that exists and redefining notions around value, both of which are critical not only for cultural preservation but also to ensure that cultural production continues to thrive. Recalibrating the way that nationals assess regional cultural goods is imperative not just for the sustainability of the creative economy, but also for the growth and betterment of a society that is struggling to strengthen both its cultural and regional identity.

8.2 Conclusions about Brand Caribbean

Defining Brand Caribbean

Apart from exploring brand, the other core focus of this thesis was Brand Caribbean. As it has never before been researched within the context of the creative economy, this thesis first set out to define it. The thesis found that one of the core tenets of Brand Caribbean is its relationship with the Caribbean locale. It showed that the physical landscape and even the climate shaped cultural expression and moulded the region's cultural aesthetic. It also found that physical spaces and even heritage sites became key features in Brand Caribbean's offerings. In fact the thesis argues that the intertwining of Brand Caribbean and the environment is so indissoluble that some cultural art forms, like reggae, cannot ever be dissociated from the Caribbean space. In a similar way, it was discovered that Brand Caribbean was also highly dependent upon the Caribbean lifestyle, as this lifestyle provided the backdrop for contextualising the region's cultural products. This lifestyle was also revealed to be a critical component of the brand experience, which this thesis has argued is of invaluable importance in the creative economy. Apart from this Brand Caribbean was also defined in terms of its personality with the research highlighting key traits such as its cheerfulness, vibrancy, humility and rebelliousness.

Again, much like brand, there are a multiplicity of interpretations surrounding Brand Caribbean. If the aim is to develop some sort of consensus, Brand Caribbean would need to be introduced into policy discourse so that CARICOM can debate what brand means, what is its role in the local context and most importantly what they envision both national and regional brands to look like. It would also be imperative that these discussions involve the general public, as the nationals of the region are also stakeholders in Brand Caribbean, and all parties need to share a cohesive understanding about the brand, how it is embedded in the

regional creative economy, and the potential that it holds to drive sector development. Unfortunately the Caribbean framework does not allow much dialogue between the public and the government, meaning that facilitating a meaning-making discussion around Brand Caribbean in a public forum remains unlikely. In fact, even on a governmental level, this type of discussion would not be given much precedence as the region has yet to realise that brand represents a central and influential mechanism within the regional creative economy.

Apart from the above, in Chapter Seven the thesis also examined the concept of Caribbeanness in relation to defining Brand Caribbean. While the thesis acknowledged that Caribbeanness has long been hard to define, the research also highlighted some elements such as rhythm, musicality, use of language and a proliferation for storytelling, that have all contributed to imbuing Caribbean cultural products with their distinctive cultural identity. Still, the thesis ultimately argued that it is in fact brand that distinguishes cultural products from their global contemporaries on the international market. However, amidst this discussion on Caribbeanness, the question of authenticity rose to the fore. While the thesis examined the various arguments around establishing authenticity, exploring issues such as the author's identity and the ability of cultural products to be true representations of Caribbean culture, ultimately it became evident that authenticity can be assessed from varying perspectives and thus shall always remain a contested term. Still, the question of authenticity remains a critical issue across the region, particularly in light of the fact that the region's cultural products are being exploited by foreign parties. But as the region is still struggling to free itself from its colonialist past and define its contemporary cultural identity, defining Caribbeanness and working through debates around cultural authenticity remains a distant reality. This of course represents yet another roadblock in the movement towards developing a greater understanding of what it means to be Caribbean, an essential task in advancing the discussions around what Brand Caribbean represents.

A composite of many brands

In discussing Brand Caribbean, the thesis demonstrated that one of its core assets was the diversity across the many nations that constitute the brand. As a brand comprised of over fifteen territories, Brand Caribbean represents a uniquely multifaceted and varied entity. However in exploring the relationship between national brands and Brand Caribbean, the thesis revealed that this diversity has also proven to be a challenge, as merging different national agendas, national identities, political frameworks and economic structures proves problematic. In fact, one of the core findings coming out of this thesis was that the regionalism is impeded by competition. In discussing the potential structure of Brand Caribbean, Section 7.4 revealed that the disparities in resources across the islands makes it difficult to sell the idea of regional initiatives, as many of the smaller territories fear being overlooked. These fears are not unfounded as the region has a longstanding competitive history punctuated by many underperforming collaborative initiatives and as the region is comprised of young nations still in the process of establishing their national identities on the global market, they are understandably weary of collective initiatives.

This competitive spirit was also not just apparent on a national scale, as the thesis revealed that the regional creative economy was also embroiled by fierce micro level competitiveness. As the islands battle their own financial and socio-political challenges, grassroots relations between the nations has been consistently deteriorating. It is often the case that nationals are now fairly unreceptive to islanders from other nations as they perceive them as competitors for jobs, resources and the like. The thesis even argued that a strong sense of patriotism and commitment to the national brand continued to dictate regional cultural consumption and thus impede the development of regional brand. All these challenges of course raise the question of whether Brand Caribbean can ever gain much traction as it is born out of a space marred by competitiveness and distrust.

While some of the stakeholders interviewed felt that Brand Caribbean's growth was dubious given the current regional context, others expressed more hopeful opinions, acknowledging that while the Caribbean was a competitive space, new pathways for collaboration were possible, especially since transnational organisations were encouraging regional integration through their funded initiatives. Regional integration has long been touted as the only means through which to give the Caribbean's small island nations greater leverage on the global market and respond to the growing threat of globalisation. However, as discussed throughout the thesis, the region has been relatively unsuccessful in finding initiatives that can further integration.

Where Brand Caribbean is concerned specifically, the challenge of regional integration is manifested in the debates over the governance of the brand. At present, the Caribbean Tourism Organisation are the chief purveyors of Brand Caribbean, and while the organisation's contribution remains invaluable, especially as tourism still remains a primary source of income for most Caribbean nations, its approach to branding the region is clearly directed by the leisure industry's agenda. This means that Brand Caribbean's identity is limited to 'sun sand and sea', when it is in fact a much larger and multifaceted entity. The absence of an independent organisation devoted to managing Brand Caribbean means that the brand is currently denied the opportunity to expand and become a reflection of the diversity and complexity that is representative of the Caribbean identity.

Apart from the above another challenge facing Brand Caribbean is managing the varying needs of the fifteen national brands. As aforementioned, the regional economy has vast disparities in wealth, resources and the strength of their nation brands. Consequently, the challenge lies in ensuring that collaborative initiatives are organised on the principle of equity as opposed to equality. This would mean that nations would be given support on the basis of need, as opposed to trying to ensure that all parties are treated equally. Likewise, national

contributions to regional goals would be weighted in comparison to the resources that that nation has at its disposal. Unfortunately, while this is great theoretical idea, its practicability and real life applicability particularly amidst the current climate, remains questionable and consequently, so too remains the fate of Brand Caribbean.

Still Brand Caribbean represents a move towards regional integration and that in itself needs to be celebrated. Of course, the move towards more collaborative endeavours needs to happen on all levels and at present there is a glaring absence of frameworks to support collaborative initiatives on all scales. Consider that currently every nation works in isolation. Even when individuals within these institutions can see the value of collaborating with other nations on regional projects, it is difficult to do so because there is no protocol or infrastructure to support these collaborations, especially as CARICOM has proven largely ineffective. As such, the many issues that arise with regards to logistics, funding and the ever pervasive competitive dynamic remain unresolved as there are no frameworks that dictate how regional collaboration should be organised.

On a national scale, as discussed in Chapter Six there is not enough cross-sectoral or inter-ministerial collaboration to allow the creative sectors to benefit from other thriving national sectors. To date, there are few regional examples of national commissions that allow sectors that support the creative industries, like tourism, trade and sport, to contribute to the discussion around creative economy development. Increased collaboration is also needed across the creative economy, because as Emma Hypolite, the Minister of Commerce, Business Development and Investment for St. Lucia explained: “There is a deep-rooted culture of ‘wanting to do everything on your own’, that we need to cause a paradigm shift away from. We need to work on developing a mind-set of our people that builds trust, and fosters greater collaboration between all players within the industry. It is imperative that we understand that we must allow marketers to market, book-keepers to keep the books, and designers to design.

If you have the talent of a designer, it is pointless that you focus your time on manufacturing or marketing, as you easily dilute your efforts at making money at what you do best”(SELA, 2015, p.34). As discussed in Chapter Seven, the region is a dichotomy of both collaboration and fierce competition. However, in order for creative sectors to thrive, this needs to change and cultural producers need to collaborate more with their colleagues so that all parties can advance their individual positions.

Finally, this need for collaboration also needs to extend outwards across the globe, as the region need to maintain closer ties with the diaspora. As discussed in Chapter Seven, the power of the diaspora in building and sharing the region’s cultural products has been grossly undervalued, particularly with regards to the distribution of the region’s cultural products. As brand ambassadors, members of the diasporan community represent unlimited access to overseas markets, however as there few coordinated governmental structures that allows the Caribbean to meaningfully engage with its communities overseas, the region fails to capitalise both on this community’s knowledge of foreign markets and their power as cultural distributors.

Brand Caribbean on the global stage

This thesis also explored the region’s role in the global creative economy. It argued that in evaluating this, economics-based assessments would prove limiting and thus the region should be alternatively assessed on the basis of its cultural contributions. In using these alternative metrics to measure the regions’ global impact, the Caribbean can really take stock of all it has produced. As aforementioned the region suffers from a gross lack of cultural confidence, likely because from a commercial standpoint its cultural products have not accrued as many economic returns as expected. However, in looking past the commerce driven analyses, it is evident that these tiny nations have had a cultural impact that is quite significant. Of course as

this thesis has demonstrated, the region's influence on the global market varies from sector to sector with stronger sectors like music and festivals playing a more important role. Still, it is clear that the region needs to expand its metrics for assessing its impact not only because it grossly underestimating its role on the global market, but also because it has implications for the region's notions of self-worth.

In a similar vein, Section 7.7 of the thesis examined the idea of brand success, illustrating the fact that for regional cultural producers, success is defined as acceptance from foreign markets. As previously discussed this penchant for foreign markets can be linked back to the region's past under European rule where the idea that what the Caribbean represented and produced was far inferior to that produced by the 'other'. Within the context of the region's past, these imperialist ideas around value and success are quite understandable. Fortunately, as the thesis has discussed recent grassroots 'go local' campaigns are slowly shifting local opinions away from the destructive self-depreciating attitude that presently dominates the region.

Finally, thesis also explored the way in which the Brand Caribbean is represented as 'selling itself'. It showed that this unfounded belief that Caribbean cultural products sell themselves is partially responsible for the passivity with which many of the region's institutions promote their national cultural products and brands. In fact, this misguided belief has dulled the drive to competitively manage Brand Caribbean's offerings and is thus stalling its growth within the global market. The failure of creative industry stakeholders to recognise the value of Brand Caribbean and actively work towards building that value means that the Caribbean is bypassing the opportunity to negotiate a greater role within the global creative economy, a costly mistake given the precarious times.

8.3 Implications for future research

As previously stated, this thesis is the first to analyse the Caribbean creative industry, focusing specifically on brand. As was evidenced in Chapter Two of thesis, regional creative economy research has traditionally focused on economic and trade based analyses, however as this research has established, there is great value to be gained from expanding the research framework to include sociocultural perspectives. While commerce-driven analyses are of course a necessity, it is time that the Caribbean invests in exploring alternative means of assessment, particularly because sociocultural analyses, the likes of this thesis, are imperative for progress with regards to cultural preservation, cultural development and regional growth, all of which are aims that have been highlighted as priorities by regional governments.

In line with the above, the Caribbean also needs to invest in additional research around brand. To date, the Caribbean creative economy has enjoyed great success, particularly when the relative size of the region is considered. However, as this thesis has argued, brand represents a new avenue for both national and regional creative economy growth and development and thus it warrants further analysis. Within this discussion on brand, one fundamental topic that requires further academic scholarship is the concept of the metabrand. As discussed in Chapter Six, the metabrand represents a unique and novel framework for analysing the structure of and relationships across the regional creative economy. In short, it has the potential to reshape the way in which the region frames cultural exchange and in so doing create new avenues through which Brand Caribbean can be developed.

In addition to the above, additional research is needed to assess the potential of Brand Caribbean. As discussed in Chapter Seven, the metrics that the region uses to assess its creative sectors and their impact need revision. However, as previously discussed, it remains unclear whether the region can truly have a more influential role in the global creative

marketplace, particularly in light of the many limitations that exist regarding politics, legislation, resources and production capabilities. Consequently, there is a need for reflexive and critical analysis that can allow the region to set realistic and attainable goals for both the regional creative economy and Brand Caribbean.

Finally, another issue that can be drawn out of this thesis and warrants investigation is the impact of brand on cultural products. In exploring the relationship between brand and culture, it is impossible to avoid the debate around whether the implementation of brand strategies can result in the 'theatricisation' or 'touristification' of culture for the purposes of export. This becomes an even greater concern in light of the current economic hardship that Caribbean nations face, as one could argue it could force them to turn to selling themselves and entangling the region in a new form of cultural colonialism. In fact, one of this thesis' interviewees questioned whether the region should focus on brand at all and to what end does the region need to brand cultural products? One could ask, is it not enough if as a region the Caribbean recognises and acknowledges its own cultural contributions, does it really need global accolades? Similarly, one could also debate whether the region truly needs to benefit economically from culture, as opposed to focusing on alternative sectors and resources which are not so closely linked to an already fragile cultural identity? These questions and concerns need to be examined further so that a greater understanding of the implications of formally institutionalising Brand Caribbean can be achieved.

In conclusion, this thesis has proven that brand is a critical and influential component of the Caribbean's creative economy with respect to cultural production, circulation and consumption. However, it has also illustrated that brand's influence is obstructed by the multiplicity of cultural, social and political challenges that shape the regional creative economy. This thesis has also explored Brand Caribbean, demonstrating both its strength and the value that it can offer the region in terms of cultural development, preservation and

protection. In using brand, the thesis was able to synthesise a broad range of factors to create a cohesive understanding of the regional creative economy, a task which is critical for a region comprised of small nations that are negotiating with and competing in the world economy. It is hoped that this thesis has contributed to the growing field of sociocultural scholarship around the regional creative economy, offering fresh insight and highlighting new pathways for analysis which can ultimately help further the region's development aims.

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Appendix A: Models of the creative economy

1. DCMS Model

Advertising
Architecture
Art and antiques market
Crafts
Design
Fashion
Film and video
Music
Performing arts
Publishing
Software
Television and radio
Video and computer games

2. Symbolic Texts Model

Core cultural industries
Advertising
Film
Internet
Music
Publishing
Television and radio
Video and computer games

Peripheral cultural industries
Creative arts

Borderline cultural industries
Consumer electronics
Fashion
Software
Sport

3. Concentric Circles Model

Core creative arts	Wider cultural industries
Literature	Heritage services
Music	Publishing
Performing arts	Sound recording
Visual arts	Television and radio
	Video and computer games
Other core cultural industries	Related industries
Film	Advertising
Museums and libraries	Architecture
	Design
	Fashion

4. WIPO Copyright Model

Core copyright industries	Interdependent copyright industries
Advertising	Blank recording material
Collecting societies	Consumer electronics
Film and video	Musical instruments
Music	Paper
Performing arts	Photocopiers, photographic equipment
Publishing	
Software	
Television and radio	
Visual and graphic art	
Partial copyright industries	
Architecture	
Clothing, footwear	
Design	
Fashion	
Household goods	
Toys	

5. UNESCO Institute for Statistics Model

Industries in core cultural domains
Museums, galleries, libraries
Performing arts
Festivals
Visual arts, crafts
Design
Publishing
Television, radio
Film and video
Photography
Interactive media

Industries in expanded cultural domains
Musical instruments
Sound equipment
Architecture
Advertising
Printing equipment
Software
Audiovisual hardware

6. Americans for the Arts Model

Advertising
Architecture
Arts schools and services
Design
Film
Museums, zoos
Music
Performing arts
Publishing
Television and radio
Visual arts

Source: UNDP and UNESCO Creative Economy Report 2013: Special Edition (2013, p. 22)

Appendix B: Strategic recommendations and action plans put forward by the Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery (CRNM)

OBJECTIVE: REGIONAL TRADE and INDUSTRIAL POLICY FOR CULTURAL INDUSTRIES		
STRATEGIES	ACTION PLAN	FACILITATING AGENCIES
1. Creation of Cultural Industries Council/Steering Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop streamlined, comprehensive regional cultural and industrial policies Outline clear guidelines on fiscal incentives (tax credits, grants) Harmonise free movement within the CSME with review of cumbersome border measures and customs procedures affecting movement of artists and cultural goods throughout the region Implement A TA carnet to facilitate regional and international temporary admission of goods Coordinate cultural policy initiatives with inter alia officials in ministries of planning and development, finance, trade, tourism, education, community affairs, and other relevant bodies 	National governments, CARICOM Secretariat, CRNM, industry associations, international donors (capacity building—training and consultants), chambers of commerce
2. Legal drafting committee for cultural industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Harmonise regional regulatory framework Supplement and support national policies 	National governments, CARICOM Secretariat, CRNM
3. Cultural exception/special and differential treatment in trade agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creative bargaining for cultural exception (review provisions and non-conforming measures in recent and past trade agreements, refer EU and Canada positions; US-Peru TPA) Include training and technology transfer component Bilateral co-production agreements 	CRNM, UNESCO, international development agencies (capacity building—training and research)
4. Brand "Caribbean"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop marketing plan for intra- and extra-regional exports of cultural goods and services Promote "Caribbean" seal of authenticity Establish distinctive Caribbean products at official multilateral and bilateral trade fora Increase participation at cultural expos 	CARICOM Secretariat, trade promotion organisations, national governments, industry associations, UNESCO
5. Content quotas for local/regional cultural expressions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase proportion of transmission time Increase exposure for independent productions Provisions for regulations on time and content in television advertising Mobilise mass media information programme on the benefits of this strategy 	National governments, CARICOM Secretariat, industry associations
6. Improved data collection to facilitate industry mapping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop data collection capacity for capturing pertinent information on cultural industries Solicit aid where necessary for guidance from other countries with experience in this area 	Statistical offices, international donors (capacity building—training and consultants)
7. Strengthen institutional capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foster creation of national cultural institutions Foster creation of industry associations in all territories Create umbrella organisations to represent national associations at high-level government meetings Create mechanisms to offer business support services, training modules Offer market research 	Trade promotion organisations, ministries of culture, small business development agencies, industry associations, NGOs, firms with active corporate social responsibility agendas
8. Develop infrastructure for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrade existing venues 	National governments, industry

OBJECTIVE: REGIONAL TRADE and INDUSTRIAL POLICY FOR CULTURAL INDUSTRIES		
STRATEGIES	ACTION PLAN	FACILITATING AGENCIES
performance and exhibitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage partnerships that enable cultural entrepreneurs to use space owned by private enterprises 	associations, private sector
9. Improve commercial presence in extra-regional markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create link between culture and foreign policy ▪ Consolidate resources to establish 'one-stop-shop' locations offering cultural goods and services in foreign markets ▪ Facilitate distribution of cultural goods and services to the diasporic, specialty, and mainstream markets. 	National governments, foreign embassies and consulates, trade promotion organisations
10. Implement trade facilitation measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish list of key inputs important to sectors ▪ Remove/reduce customs duties on key inputs, equipment, and products with regional material 	National governments, customs agencies, trade promotion organisations
11. Improve information and communication technologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Facilitate convergence of the media, computer, and telecommunications sectors ▪ Improve access to modern systems of telecommunications ▪ Foster education in Internet technology ▪ Foster development of e-commerce ▪ Invest energies in uploading content on the Internet, creating attractive Web sites, developing Internet broadcasting ▪ Strengthen copyright administration and rights ownership 	National governments, e-commerce secretariats, trade promotion organisations
12. Improve access to non-governmental sources of financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Disseminate information on special credit needs of cultural entrepreneurs ▪ Identify financial instruments suitable for sectors ▪ Disseminate information on grants available through international donor and development agencies. 	National governments, industry associations, trade promotion organisations, financial institutions

Source: Nurse et al., 2007, pp. 216-217

Appendix C: Photographs depicting traditional Carnival masquerade costumes



Women portray the Dame Lorraine character during Carnival celebrations

Source: Caribbean Beat Magazine, 2012.



Senor Gomez dressed in a traditional fancy sailor costume

Source: Maria Nunes, 2012



Children on stilts as traditional Moko Jumbies during Trinidad carnival Celebrations

Source: Caribbean Beat Magazine, 2003.

Appendix D: Photographs depicting contemporary Carnival masquerade costumes



Revellers covered in oil and pain at J'ouvert / Ole Mas celebrations in Grenada

Source: Spicemas Corporation, 2010.



Women in contemporary 'bikini and beads' costumes at Jamaica's Carnival celebrations

Source: Bacchanal Jamaica, 2015



Kay Mason as 'Island Queen' in the Queen of Carnival competition, Trinidad and Tobago Carnival

Source: Brian Ng Fatt in the Trinidad Guardian Newspaper, 2011

Appendix E: List of Carnivals produced by the Caribbean diaspora

<u>UK (52)</u> Acton Carnival – London Adlington District Carnival Barrow in Furness Balham Carnival Bedford Carnival Birmingham Carnival Bloxwich Carnival – Walsall Bradford Carnival Bridgewater Carnival Bristol-St. Paul's Carnival Broomfield Carnival Cambridge Carnival International Cardiff Mas Carnival – Wales Chirivari Day - Folkstone Cleethorpes Carnival Parade Coventry Caribbean Festival Croyden Mela Festival Derby Carnival Devizes Carnival Dover Carnival Edinburgh Mela Gloucester Carnival Hackney Mare De Gras Hereford Carnival High Wycombe Carnival Hinckley Carnival Huddersfield Carnival Kendal Torchlighting Carnival Leeds West Indian Carnival Leicester Caribbean Carnival Liverpool Brouhaha Int'l Carnival Luton Carnival Manchester Int'l Caribbean Carnival Newcastle Carnival Newham Africabana Norwich Lord Mayor's Procession Notting Hill Carnival Nuneaton Carnival Oldham Carnival Plymouth Carnival Preston City Caribbean Carnival Reading Community Carnival Ryde Carnival Sheffield Carnival Southampton Carnival Stafford Carnival Stoke-On-Trent Carnival	Waltham Forest Caribbean Carnival - London Woking Wolverhampton Carnival Wycombe Multi-Cultural Carnival <u>Europe (4)</u> Rotterdam – Netherlands Nice – France Stockholm – Sweden Nyon – Switzerland <u>US (27)</u> Atlanta Caribbean Folk Festival Baltimore Carnival Bayou Bacchanal Boston Carnival Brooklyn Labour Day Carnival Cambridge Carnival Int'l – Massachusetts Carama – Albany NY Caricabela – Los Angeles Carnaval San Francisco Chicago Carnival Dallas Caribbean Festival DC Carnival Detroit Carnival Hartford Carnival Houston Carnival Jacksonville Beach Carnival Jersey City Caribbean Carnival Long Island Carnival Miami Carnival Oakland Carnival Orlando Carnival Philadelphia Carnival Rochester Carnival Springfield Carnival Tallahassee Carnival Tampa Bay Caribbean Carnival Westchester <u>Canada (7)</u> Calgary Carnival Caribana – Toronto Caribe-Expo – Ontario Caripeg – Manitoba Carnival de Quebec Edmonton Carnival Vancouver Carnival
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Source: Ministry of Trade and Industry, Trinidad and Tobago, 2006. pp.80

Appendix F: Interviewee database

Annalise: Fashion Designer and Founder – Eponymous fashion label, Trinidad & Tobago

Annalise is a young fashion designer specialising in bridal couture based in based in Trinidad and Tobago. Having been raised in Europe and trained in the UK, Annalise offers a distinct perspective of someone who is a Caribbean national but who can still offer a more detached outlook on the local creative economy. As a specialist designer, her experiences shed light on a different set of strategies and tools that are at play when discussing brands within the regional fashion sector.

Anthony: Executive– Jamaica Intellectual Property Office

Anthony is a young male executive at the Jamaica Intellectual Property Office (JIPO). The JIPO is responsible for managing the various intellectual property systems on the island including the overseeing of trademarks, copyrights, patents and cultural expressions. As an executive member of staff Anthony was able to discuss the existing frameworks in place for protecting Jamaica's cultural products. He was also able to speak extensively on the national 'Brand Jamaica' campaign as he was instrumental in its development and implementation.

Avril: Marketing Executive – Caribbean Tourism Organisation, International

Avril is a middle-aged female executive at the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO). The CTO is a regional tourism agency that represents twenty eight territories across the region. Given her executive role at the CTO, Avril was able to discuss the many challenges involved in managing a regional brand. She was also able to speak on the issues that national brands face and the complexities of creating a framework which can respond to the needs of national brands as well as further the aims of the wider region.

Candice and Crystal: Fashion designers and Founders – Organic Fashion Brand, Trinidad and Tobago

Candice and Crystal are siblings and co-owners of an organic clothing brand. These young sisters have built a strong brand that draws heavily on their personalities, their lifestyles and their spirituality as followers of the Rastafari religion. They were able to discuss their unique experience of what they themselves described as “being the face of a brand” and the process of building a brand that is so closely intertwined with their lives. As younger designers they were also able to shed light on the way in which cultural producers now use social media to connect with potential consumers and build a global brand presence.

Christopher: Artist – Singer, writer, producer, director, Trinidad and Tobago

Christopher is a prolific and esteemed artist involved in the music and theatre sectors as a singer, writer, producer and director. Given his decades-long involvement in the arts he was able to critically discuss the creative economy’s development from the perspective of the creator. He was also able to discuss the role that brand plays for the cultural producer and how it shapes the process of creative production across various sectors.

Denise: Executive – Jamaica Association of Composers, Authors and Publishers

Denise is a middle aged female executive at the Jamaica Association of Composers, Authors and Publishers (JACAP). JACAP is a non-profit organisation that manages the collection of royalties for several creative sectors. In her capacity as a manager, Denise was able to discuss the role that intellectual property plays in the regional creative economy. She was also able to discuss how a lack of intellectual property protection affects the economy’s growth, particularly in terms of both cultural development and brand development.

Elizabeth: Executive Director – Cultural heritage organisation, Jamaica

Elizabeth is a middle-aged female who serves as the executive director at a national cultural heritage organisation of Jamaica. As an agency of culture arm of the government, her organisation is responsible for preserving Jamaica's cultural heritage. As an interviewee, Elizabeth was able to explain the role of public sector organisations in developing the island's nation brand. Furthermore, as the executive director of a national organisation she was able to outline the challenges that these large-scale organisations face in their aim to document, preserve and share the island's culture on both a national and global scale.

Ethel: Co-founder – National Jazz festival, Jamaica

Ethel is an older female executive and co-founder of one of Jamaica's largest and longest running jazz festivals. The festival, one of Jamaica's premier events, is not merely a music event but also an integral part of the island's tourism landscape. Having managed the festival for the past twenty-five years Ethel was able to discuss the long term processes involved in building and maintaining a strong brand in the festival sector. She was also able to discuss the way the sector has metamorphosed over the past two decades and the shifting role that brand and nation brand has adopted over the years.

Gerald: Founder and Director – Jamaican Music Website

Gerald is a young male entrepreneur, advertising executive and founder of a popular music website. His site is the go-to source for news and new music releases for Jamaican music, and the site has forged a close relationship with industry stakeholders and artists, as many entertainers now reach out to the site to have their music reviewed and featured. Gerald was able to offer insight into the way in which brand works in the music sector, based on his years of experiences working with multiple artists and tracking their career trajectories. He was also

able to discuss the musicality and history of regional music and comment on its role in shaping the regional brand.

Giselle: Marketing Executive – St. Lucia Tourist Board, St. Lucia

Giselle is a young female executive working in brand development at the St. Lucia Tourist Board. The St. Lucia Tourist Board is responsible for managing the nation's tourism brand and its portfolio extends to overseeing the island's core festivals including the St. Lucia Jazz festival. As a marketing executive, Giselle was able to offer insight into the process of developing a national brand within the regional context. Furthermore, as St. Lucia represents one of the region's smaller islands, her interview also explores the issues that these lesser known territories face in comparison to the three nations that typically dominate the region.

Halcyon: Entertainment Executive – Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment, Jamaica

Halcyon is a middle-aged female executive at the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment in Jamaica. Her unit is in charge of facilitating entertainment opportunities both locally and abroad for the entertainment industry's stakeholders. As her division is attached to the tourism sector she was able to discuss the relationship between the two sectors, as well as the way in which Jamaica's national brand impacts the entertainment sector and its brands. As an executive member of staff she was also able to share insight into how inter-ministerial developments regarding brand are forged at the highest administrative levels.

Isla: Editor-in Chief, Regional lifestyle magazine, Barbados

Isla is young female executive who serves in several managerial capacities at a publishing company which produces multiple titles. These esteemed magazines document the lifestyle, culture, architecture and people from across the region. As the founder of this publishing house Isla was able to speak extensively about the Caribbean lifestyle and culture and the way

in which it differs across the islands. She was also able to discuss ideas surrounding regional integration given her extensive experience engaging with nationals from different territories.

Jordan: Founder and Director – National fashion show, Trinidad and Tobago

Jordan is a young male adult fashion designer who is also the founder and director of a national fashion show. His recently rebranded show is the largest fashion show in Trinidad and Tobago, showcasing some of the islands most prominent and established designers, as well as lesser known rising stars. Jordan's contribution was invaluable as he was able to offer insight into the processes and challenges involved in building the brand for a large scale event in the Caribbean fashion industry. He was also able to describe the intricacies of navigating the Caribbean's social structures and the critical role of interpersonal networks in brand building within the region.

Joseph: Executive - Jamaica Cultural Development Commission

Joseph is a young male executive at the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission (JCDC). The JCDC is a national agency dedicated to developing programmes and initiatives that can foster the growth of the creative industries including the performing arts, culinary arts, literary arts and visual arts and festival sectors. As such, Joseph was able to discuss the national agenda relating to cultural development and the role that brand played within this framework.

Justin: Founder – Regional entertainment company, Trinidad and Tobago

Justin is a young entrepreneur who runs one of the largest entertainment companies in the Caribbean. His organisation works across the region producing elite live events throughout the year, usually in tandem with each island's own festival calendar. As his company has successfully expanded across the region, Justin was able to discuss the process of building a

truly regional brand. He was able to offer insight into the role of national brands and the challenges that patriotic allegiances can present for a regional brand.

Kerwin: Executive – National Carnival Commission, Trinidad and Tobago

Kerwin is an older male executive at the National Carnival Commission (NCC), an agency of the government of Trinidad and Tobago. The organisation is responsible for the management and execution of the nation's annual Carnival festival, the largest in the region second to Brazil. In his capacity as an influential executive member of staff, Kerwin was able to share information regarding the organisational structure and networks that support this large scale event. He was also able to discuss the national agenda for developing the brand on the global stage.

Kwame: Calypso Artist/Executive – Trinbago Unified Calypsonians Organisation, Trinidad and Tobago

Kwame is an older male veteran calypso artist who also serves as an executive member of the Trinbago Unified Calypsonians Organisation (TUCO). TUCO is a national agency that champions the needs of its members and seeks to promote local music both regionally and internationally. As both an artist and executive Kwame was able to offer a well-rounded perspective on the issues that face the regional music sector. He was also able to comment on the government's plans for taking national music to the international stage.

Lyn: Editor and Publisher – Caribbean fashion magazine, St. Lucia

Lyn is a middle-aged female who founded and still serves as Editor-in-Chief of what is arguably the Caribbean's premier fashion magazine. As editor of this publication, she is deeply entrenched in the regional fashion sector and could offer well informed opinions on the way the regional fashion sector works, as well as its role within the global economy. Furthermore,

having travelled the Caribbean and interacted with stakeholders from across the islands, Lyn was also able to comparatively assess various national sectors and discuss brand on a personal, national and regional scale.

Neil: Marketing professional – The National Cultural Foundation Barbados

Neil is a middle-aged male administrator at the National Cultural Foundation in Barbados. The National Cultural Foundation is a government agency whose mission is to facilitate cultural development and creative opportunities for those involved in the cultural industries. The organisation is responsible for overseeing the production of the nation's cultural festivals and events. Neil's interview was able to shed light on the institutional framework and the decision-making processes of a public sector organisation that is charged with developing the nation's cultural brand.

Nicholas: Executive – Fashion Association of Trinidad and Tobago

Nicholas is a young male serving as an executive member of the Fashion Association of Trinidad and Tobago, an organisation formed in conjunction with the government in an attempt to drive the growth of the local fashion sector. As Nicholas was not a fashion designer himself, he was able to discuss the growth of the local fashion industry from the somewhat detached perspective of someone who was invested in the sector but not encumbered by his personal experiences to succeed within it. Nicholas was also able to amalgamate the variety of different approaches to brand building that he has witnessed, as opposed to relating a singular experience like the other fashion sector interviewees.

Paul: Marketing Executive – VP Records, USA

Paul is a middle-aged male executive at the world's largest Caribbean music label – VP Records. Based in New York City, this label represents the Caribbean's elite artistes from a range of genres (reggae, dancehall soca), such as Shaggy, Sean Paul, Beenie Man, Bounty Killer, Bunji Garlin and Barrington Levy. In his capacity as a sales and marketing executive, Paul was able to give insight into the workings of the music industry, the personal experiences of artists, as well as the processes involved in branding and marketing these artists. Furthermore, as Paul was not a Caribbean national himself, his testimony was unique in that it reflected an outsider's perspective of the Caribbean.

**Rita: Executive – Culture Division – Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism,
Trinidad and Tobago**

Rita is a middle – aged female executive serving in an executive capacity at the Ministry of arts and Multiculturalism in Trinidad and Tobago. Her role involved managing the many arms of the national culture portfolio including heritage preservation, performing arts, festival development and publications. Given her high rank, Rita was able to explain the inner working of the government, as well as the networks and relationships that were integral to building the region's cultural and national brand. She was also able to discuss the changes that needed to be implemented in order to strengthen brand building, which have been drawn from her years of experience within the sector.

Shirley: Executive – Culture Division – Tobago House of Assembly, Tobago

Shirley is a middle aged female who serves as an executive at the Tobago House of Assembly. The Tobago House of Assembly is the governmental arm that handles the affairs of Tobago, the smaller of the two isles that constitute the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. As an executive director Shirley oversees the preservation of cultural heritage, the promotion of the

island and the production of the many cultural activities that the island offers. As such, Shirley was able to give insight into the role of culture in relation to the national brand, its relationship with other national sectors and the challenges associated with cultural development and brand building when working with limited resources and a smaller budget.

**Stella: Veteran Fashion Designer, Eponymous Fashion Label,
Trinidad and Tobago**

Stella is an older female and one of the region's most elite fashion designers. Based in Trinidad and Tobago, she has won a vast array of regional accolades and has amassed a large following both at home and abroad. Given her decades-long involvement in the fashion sector, her experience was invaluable and she was able to offer insight into both the current state of the sector and the challenges and changes that have marked its evolution over time. She was also able to speak on the intricacies of building and sustaining a brand that has become one of region's most prominent over the last four decades.

Tamoya: Manager – Bob Marley Group of Companies, Jamaica

Tamoya is a young female executive employed for the Bob Marley Group. This organisation handles the affairs of the late music icon Bob Marley, whose estate is now currently valued at over 100 million US dollars. As a manager, Tamoya was able to discuss the strategies behind what is arguably the region's strongest and most powerful brand. She was also able to discuss the close relationship between the national brand and commercial brands such as the ones she manages.

Appendix G: Sample interview guide for music industry stakeholders

About Caribbean Music

- How would you describe what you do/your role?
- If Caribbean music was a person, how would you describe its personality?
- What makes Caribbean music distinctly/uniquely Caribbean?
- How is the Caribbean music market different from the international market?
- What role do our stories and histories play in the local music industry?
- Does the Caribbean, as a location, play a pivotal role in the regional music industry?

Exploring Brands:

- How would you describe brand? Your brand?
- What role do you think brand plays within our regional music industry?
- How do you build a brand in the Caribbean music industry?
- Who or what determines value of a brand?
- Do Caribbean people value Caribbean brands?
- Does brand affect the creative process?
- Is there anything particularly unique about the way brand works in the music sector, in comparison with other local cultural sectors?
- What are the key issues in brand management, specifically concerns unique to the Caribbean market?

The Caribbean Brand:

- A. Does a cohesive Caribbean music brand identity exist? Can you describe it?
B. If not, is there the potential for the development of one? And what would it look like?
- What role does Caribbean music play on the international market?
- What recent changes or events, either industry or government-led, have had a critical impact on the Caribbean music industry's development?

Closing Questions

- Is there anything else that needs to be said?
- Is there anyone else you would recommend that I interview, who you believe can provide unique industry insight for this research?

Appendix H: Sample transcript

Interviewee: Annalise– Fashion Designer and Founder, Eponymous Fashion Label, Trinidad and Tobago

Interviewer: Gabrielle Ferdinand

Date of Interview: January 13th 2015

Duration of Interview: 00:36:48

Location of Interview: Restaurant, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago

GF: So how would you describe what you do?

AC: Oh wow. What I do is a mix of fashion related things, across different fields, with different skills, but it all is relevant to the creative and fashion industry. But as a fashion designer, I specialise and I'm focused on bridal and special occasion wear, which is more of a strategic choice because of the location that I'm in and stuff. I'm primarily interested in things like corsetry, red-carpet fashion etc., but because we don't have that here, the bridal industry is the next step to that kind of aesthetic.

GF: If Caribbean fashion was a person how would you describe its personality?

AV: Oh my goodness. Cosquille! Its personality would be a mix and match of different moods and attitudes and sometimes they get it very very wrong, but when they get it right it looks awesome.

GF: And what do you think makes Caribbean fashion uniquely Caribbean?

AV: I think because we have such, I mean it's obvious, we have such a diverse people. We have influences from all over the world in our people alone, but at the same time it's Trinidadian. Regardless of whether in Chinese-Trinidadian, African-Trinidadian, Indian-Trinidadian, it's still first and foremost Trinidadian. And I think because of our

location we have, I mean sadly we're not closer to Europe which I wish we did have that influence a little more. But we are close to Latin America and the States and stuff, so we have the influences of other cultures as well, not just our own. So when you take all that and you throw it in a pot, and you get this thing that comes out that's colourful and full of spirit and full of life and you don't know how to describe it, because it's not necessarily like African sort of ethnic fashion, it's got its own twang – that's Caribbean.

GF: So do you think the Caribbean's history and our stories have a part to play in our fashion?

AV: Definitely. Definitely! I mean because culturally we celebrate holidays across the board. We celebrate Ramadan, we celebrate Eid, Divali, Christmas, you know it's cultural, religion. And all of these things culturally have their own fashions associated with it. Like the Indian culture has the sari, it's the most obvious one or whatever. And you see everybody in Trinidad celebrating everything, and becoming involved in everything. So those different fashions, those different cultures influence our fashion choices depending on the time of year, what season it is, whatever it is. So I do see those things influencing what we wear.

GF: So can I ask now you, how do you describe your brand?

AV: My brand? Evolving. For me always - the Folliage⁹⁶ brand has been a moment in fantasy. And I think this also has a lot to do with how I grew up with my skin, the idea of escaping for a minute. In previous interviews, I've always said reality is so boring, it can be so mundane, waking up every day and doing the same thing. So the idea of playing dress up, taking that into adulthood, playing dress up for a moment, even as a

⁹⁶ Brand's name replaced by pseudonym.

bride - my brand is giving that moment of fantasy to a woman, whatever occasion she has, whatever look she wants and whoever she wants to be for that occasion, that's what's it's about. Use your imagination, do what you want to do, be what you want to be, and who cares what everybody else thinks.

GF: So in terms of brand, what role do you think it plays in our regional fashion industry?

AV: Brand – Oh huge huge role. In our industry or on a whole? Within the region I think designers are now starting to realise the importance of things like branding and marketing. Because I don't want to say small island mentality, but the way it is, everybody has an aunty or an uncle who sews or is a tailor. Most people that you ask how they learnt to sew, most people didn't go to school for it. They learnt it from their mom or from observing somebody or whatever. So we all know how to sew, we all know how to make a dress, or we couldn't afford one at the time so we used to make it ourselves to go out without friends.

So branding was never something that comes into people's head. They merely have a clothing line or you just sew and sell, and you never really think about the identity behind what you're doing, and the fact that that is a brand in itself, like you're selling a part of yourself. Now I think with designers like Adrian Foster, myself, Lush Kingdom from James Hackett, there are certain things about what they do that it's very uniquely an Adrian Foster, it's very uniquely [gestures] and that is brand. That's what your brand is, your identity. Meiling – you know when something is a Meiling. So I think now people are realising the importance of it. It's not just about sewing something pretty and sending it down the runway. Or having someone wear it and put a picture on Facebook, it's about selling a brand.

I think it's developing now, like in the last three or four years people are giving more attention to that. And I would say that's more the business side of the fashion industry. I always say we're not lacking in talent. Creativity and talent is not the problem. It's the business savvy and now people are realising the importance of the business savvy if we want to take the industry to the next step. Branding is part of that.

GF: So, how exactly would you go about building a brand in the Caribbean fashion industry?

AV: Trial and error. How do you go about building a brand? I mean you've got your obvious things like your logo is so important. The visibility. The identity. People see the logo and they know who it is. Like a lot of people don't know who I am, but when you mention the name of the brand or they see the logo, they'll be like yeah I know that, I've seen it. Seeing as that's the first impression anybody has of your brand, that is like so crucial and important.

And then after that, its things like the attitude of your brand. How do you market it? What are the visuals that are associated with your brand? The photo shoots that you do, the magazines that you appear in, the runway shows that you decide to participate in. I mean, everything is very strategic. You have to be really strategic about where you place your brand. It's not about oh I want exposure, so I'll just be in any old show. I mean I cater to bridal so there are some places that I won't necessarily be. Like you're not going to see me in Upmarket or whatever, and that's not taking away from that, it's just not conducive to my brand and what I do.

GF: Coming from a small island then and dealing with various small islands, do you think there is an issue with interpersonal relationships and building brands? Do you need to have a lot of networks and connections?

AV: Oh yeah, well everything in the creative industry is networking, because you can be the most talented person in the world and if you don't know the right people. And you might not be that talented but you just have the right marketing team behind you. [Laughs] Like there are some entertainers who can't sing but they just have great production teams. So networking is huge. For example Meiling takes on interns and all her interns go on to do really great things. And I think it's because of their connection to Meiling and the opportunities that she can help them with. And I think if people tried to do it by themselves, it would take a whole lot longer, with a whole lot more mistakes, than having the guidance of the network and the people who know and can push you in the right direction. So, the importance of networking – that's huge.

And also we have a very um, 'Trinidad culture enjoys the socialite scene, pseudo-socialite scene. So when I say networking – also being seen. Sometime you know, you get invited to an event, you don't necessarily want to go but you know for the sake of your brand, or for the sake of building your identity, you go, you show your face, take a couple pictures just so people can see you were there. So you know it's all very strategic, it's like a game, a little chessboard game.

GF: Interesting. So do you have to patronise other people's brands and events in order for them to reciprocate? For them to return the favour?

AV: Absolutely. Well, depending on the time of the year I'm more one thing than I am another. So there are people who focus on their brand year-through and are designers year-through. But because I'm also a fashion editor, freelance writer and things like

that, sometimes I'm not so much a designer. So my season is the wedding season. So when it's not that season, right now Christmas to January, I'm writing. And that's kind of my hat that I'm wearing as a designer and an editor. So for me personally when I patronise other brands it's really me showing support for the industry. And it's not that I see you as my competition of whatever, because I'm not thinking as a designer. And as far as I'm concerned there's no such thing as competition because I believe there's enough for everybody. There's room for everybody at the table because no one designer does exactly what another designer does. And that's why we all have our different clientele. There's room for all of us to make money and eat a bread.

So the importance of patronising other designers for me, and for a lot of people, it comes from the support. Because our industry is so small in Trinidad and even in the Caribbean, there's only so many of us. And the resources, there are only so many resources. So because so many of us are using the same resources all the time it's very important that we support and uplift each other, because I could do you a favour, you can do me back a favour and together we grow. Or you can withhold something from somebody and then nobody grows, we're all stagnant because we're all withholding very important valuable information from one another.

GF: So now, in terms of a brand, who determines the value of a brand?

AV: Well I've spoken about brand identity, so the value of the brand comes from my brand, comes from me and what I portray with my brand. But then the second step of that is the customer and how the customer wears the brand. And so I mean you really have to think about who is your customer, who is your target market and really market yourself to those people, so that you get the right brand identity, you become associated with the right people that you want your brand to be known for.

GF: Does branding affect your creative process?

AV: Yes!

GF: How?

AV: Yes. Like since I made the decision to go into bridal and special occasion wear, sometimes there's something I want to make just off of inspiration, and something that I'm like that would look really really cute. But then you think am I really going to market this under Folliage, because does it really fall under the bracket of what Folliage is? I mean my end goal with my brand is to be a luxury brand and then I make something really cute but does it help the brand name? So you kind of have to think alright – maybe it's just something cute that I make and I wear myself, or I give a friend to wear.

I guess that's why you see other big brands, you see that they have a certain name but then you have diffusion lines that are aimed at different target markets. So that can be something. You do a diffusion line that's more for a different crowd, and then it allows you to express your creativity in different ways without being limited by what you set your brand identity as.

GF: Is there anything particularly unique about the way that brand works within the fashion sector, as compared to other sectors?

AV: How do you mean?

GF: For example, do you think brand is more or less important than it is in say the music industry or any other cultural sector?

AV: No I think branding is everything. When I say it's everything, because it is your first impression of something. And people may become familiar with a logo and they have an opinion about it already. They may never have seen the clothes but they have an opinion of the logo, or they have an opinion of, the impression they have of what it is.

For example, one of the local graphic tees designers Keegan Simon – his brand is amazing. His branding is amazing. The way he sells his product the packaging you get for the product, everything. And you see Individual Aesthetic, and you think about graffiti, you think about spray paint, you think about all these things. And it doesn't matter if you've ever seen a tee or not, you just see his logo and you know what it is. That's why I say branding is everything because it's the first voice that you speak with before somebody even walks in your store, before somebody even buys something from you, that's the first thing they speak about, it's the brand.

GF: Can I ask you, what are the major issues in managing a brand?

AV: Being a mom. [Laughs] That's totally personal – time management. But what are the major issues in managing a brand? Having business knowledge, because a lot of people do a design degree and they don't really learn a lot about the business behind it. I remember when I was at London College of Fashion one of the first things they told us was 95% of what you do as a designer is going to be business, 5% is going to be designing. And half the group groaned because we are all there to sketch and make nice clothes.

So, the idea and the end product is fine, but the key issues is marketing it at the right time, marketing it in the right space, to the right people, so that you get the most traction off of that, so that your product becomes wanted. So that you're in demand.

The key issue is to always be relevant, always be present, and just have people – supply and demand.

GF: Are you concentrated primarily in the Caribbean or are you trying to expand to the international market?

AV: My vision for my brand is international empire. Oscar de la Renta unfortunately is no longer with us. And I would love to hold the... Some people have a problem with me for this, some people are ok because they understand where I'm coming with form this – but you see words like local and Caribbean I have a problem with it when people put it in front of the word designer. Because Oscar de la Renta has built such a name for himself – nobody says Caribbean designer Oscar de la Renta it's just designer. And I believe an artist is an artist full stop. And I think when you put local designer so and so, all of a sudden you diminish what it is somebody does. Because by saying local, for me the context is, it's only relevant to this set of people here, this island, this whatever, and I don't like that. I really don't like that. So when people say Caribbean designer or local designer I don't have a problem with it, but I prefer you say designer from Trinidad, designer from the Caribbean, but don't make it the adjective of the word designer.

GF: So you don't want your products to be seen as uniquely Caribbean, you want them to be seen as taken on their own recognisance?

AV: My product is not Caribbean. It's not. I'm European trained with a Caribbean background. But at the same time I've lived in the middle east and I've lived in the Mediterranean and those cultures affect me greatly in my inspiration as well. So I'd say where the Caribbean comes into my clothing, I would say the spirit of my clothing is Caribbean, it's fun, it's playful. Sometimes there's a lot of colour and whatever, but I

don't do prints. If you look at my stuff I never work with prints, my construction is corsetry based. I have structure bodices and stuff like that, and nobody in the Caribbean is wearing a corset. So when people say Caribbean designer I'm thinking – do you know my work? Have you looked at my work? Nothing wrong with being a Caribbean designer. I am Caribbean, I will never say I'm not Trinidadian but I think is it necessary?

GF: So as someone who want to be seen as a global designer, do you think it's possible to brand Caribbean fashion?

AV: It's really interesting that you ask that, because I'm on the board of directors for Fashion Association of Trinidad and Tobago, and FATT is one of the stakeholders along with a number of other organisations for the strategic planning consultative group. They're basically conducting surveys to be able to give a report to the Ministry of Culture about the state of the fashion industry and about what is the plan moving forward in terms of what fashion industry stakeholders should do for us to be on an international stage. And one of the things we discuss at our meetings is either Brand Caribbean or Brand T&T. Look how we have brand Jamaica, which is huge!

So you're asking me if I think there's potential for a Brand Caribbean?

GF: Yeah.

AV: Ok, one of the things we're always battling around at these meetings is if we think Brand Caribbean can work. We have Brand Jamaica and we have Brand Barbados as well and it would be – how does being Brand Caribbean affect those brands that are already in existence? I think were we to have Brand Caribbean – all of the Caribbean needs to be involved. And when you say Caribbean what are we discussing –

CARICOM countries or are we including our Latin Caribbean brother and sisters who have their own fashion market altogether – you know, your Dominican, your Costa Rica? But hey they're Caribbean – are we talking Caribbean Sea? So it's a huge discussion that's happening right now, about how would the individual fashion industries would be able to work with one another to actually create that. Is that going to cause more problems, or is that going to help us and basically take a lot of the work off our shoulders in helping Trinidad to move further into the industry. So, I mean I can't definitively answer your question about the importance of Brand Caribbean. I think once you get the formula right it can go very very good. If it's not done right it could go very very bad and then we'll spend a long time repairing some damage and starting back from square one.

GF: But then you mention the idea of Brand Jamaica, and I did speak to someone about it, but the thing is that we have so many diverse nationalities to come together and brand – what would it look like?

AV: There's that. And everybody would have to agree on it, and your Cuba etc., that's a whole other set of people. Like do they want to be associated with the English-speaking Caribbean? How are we doing this? First of all how are we defining the word Caribbean? And then Brand Jamaica, it doesn't just include clothing. Brand Jamaica is everything it's their sports, it's their music. Brand Jamaica is huge. You see the colours – you know! You see the gold red and green, you know Jamaica, you know Bob Marley, you can walk into a souvenir shop. So how do we compete with that? Do they want us riding on their coat-tails doing a Brand Caribbean?

- GF: That's one of the things one of my supervisors had pointed out to me, when do my research I look at Jamaica, Barbados and Trinidad, and what happens to the other small islands?
- AV: And that's the thing, we're diminishing their value. Is everybody going to get equal credit? Is everybody going to get equal leverage? Or are we really only going to lobby for those major countries – Trinidad Jamaica Barbados, because then I mean if I was from St. Kitts or St. Lucia, I mean I would be a little bit pissed.
- GF: But that's the whole thing of looking at brand as a holistic group is that maybe we would be able to compete on an international stage, because then maybe we would have a pool of resources? But then where would those resources come from?
- AV: And who gets first dibs?
- GF: But don't we have organisations like CARICOM to manage?
- AV: A lot of people are supposed to be doing a lot of things [laughs]
- GF: So again, the idea of Caribbean fashion, holistically – involving everybody, what role do you think we play on international market?
- AV: Right now? We have a very very small role if any at all. I mean Trinidad on the international stage, and this is from my point of view having lived in Europe – nobody really cares whether we're there or not there, we're not making any major sort of , it's not like Karl Lagerfeld waking up one day and saying he's pulling out of fashion and the whole industry collapses. Yeah Trinidad could be there or Trinidad could not be there and it doesn't make a difference to anybody.

I know that sounds horrible but I'm being honest. It comes back to business mind and business strategy, I think our foundation rocks have been too shaky to really build anything of lasting impression. Right now it's sad because we've wasted a lot of time because we're playing catch-up with an international industry that is decades ahead of us. Literally we have to break everything down to the core to build it back up again, to have some kind of international presence as Trinidad or as the Caribbean.

GF: Do you think we've had any critical changes that are helping Brand Caribbean. You saw the 'Haute Caribe' documentary. In the video they did say explicitly – I can't remember who said it, but she said Caribbean fashion is really Trinidad and Tobago fashion because we are the forerunners. So that was interesting to say, in something titled 'Caribbean'.

AV: Depends on how many people you want to lynch you [laughs]

GF: So even when we're trying to push something Caribbean - because it is called 'Haute Caribe', it still comes down to a specific island is being pushed – their agenda.

AV: I think it's because we do the most. I mean whether it's good or bad we do the most fashion things. In terms of the events, we have the most fashion designers per capita, the top Caribbean designers all come from Trinidad. You go to Caribbean Fashion Week, and the top Caribbean designers in Caribbean Fashion Week in Jamaica are The Cloth, Meiling, Claudia Pegus. I mean when people go to see the top designers and they're all showing in one night or there's one top designer per night, it's always a Trinidadian. So I can understand where the comment came from. I don't necessarily agree with it but I understand where it came from.

GF: Well do you think we've had any recent changes whether industry or government led? Because you know they've recently launched the Creative Industries Company, they call it Creative TT. Do you think that these initiatives have helped or are going to help us further the industry or brand?

AV: Um, I think the initiatives have the potential to help us. One of the issues is that sometimes the people that are making the decisions are not knowledgeable about the industry. So you have a discord between who actually knows what's going on and knows what's necessary and who's in control of saying yes or no. So you can go and plead your case sometimes with a Ministry or whatever, but you know the business man sitting behind his desk who has never attended a fashion show in his life, but he's the one responsible for signing a check or saying yes to sponsoring a certain thing that could really push the industry far and he doesn't understand so he doesn't see it as profitable and says no. I mean you have a real divide between who knows what's going on and who doesn't but has power and yields power.

GF: So it has a lot to do with the management?

AV: It makes no sense, it's like me making a decision on whether an athlete should be able to go to a sporting event because I'm the one that has the money but I know nothing about sports. So, it's hard. It's hard because people think of fashion and they really think it's a frivolous thing. And you look at the international fashion industry and its a trillion dollar industry, multi-trillion dollar industry, and the ways in which it can help our economy with the talent that we have here is amazing. And then you see money being put into programs that last like a month or two. Or individuals getting funding that don't necessarily deserve in really frivolous industries, or really frivolous projects.

And I'm not saying that anyone is more important than anyone else, I'm just saying that it would be nice if fashion got a really fair legitimate turn. And when I say legitimate, I mean a consistent turn too. Not just one amazing event like Vogue Italia which everyone thinks is amazing and then three months later no one is hearing anything about it. Or the actual magazine takes eight months to feature us when it was supposed to only take four months. You know what I mean. Like give us what we ask for and give us what we ask for the way we asked for it. Don't throw us a bone. And personally that's how I feel it is most of the time, it's like you're throwing us a bone. Like that will appease them for now, until the next time they want something. No. Let's actually put some resources and effort into building this thing so that at some point we can rock back and watch the money flowing in from the fashion talent.

GF: Interesting. So I know you say you're on the board of the fashion association

AV: You're quoting me as a designer eh, don't quote me as a director of the board here. I'm just saying remember the different hats [Laughs].

GF: When you interview people in the creative industries, I was telling my supervisor, everybody has more than one hat.

AV: And that's because there's so few of us, so few knowledgeable people, that many of us have to do many things in order to even try and have some sort of influence. Because you know if anyone just left it like I just do this and this alone there would ever be any building across the bridge.

GF: Ok, so can you tell me, as a designer, in terms of the structure of the regional fashion industry, or even within Trinidad and Tobago, do you think, do you think there's an

industry here? Because a previous interviewee said we have a lot of designers but we don't have anyone who does production, manufacturing etc?

AV: There's no manufacturing. There's no factory – well there is one factory, but I mean what are we all supposed to do, go to the same factory and all have our stuff made by the same person. I mean great business for them but after a while it's a little overwhelming. And then you have to think about competition, you have to think about trade secrets, stuff like that. I mean my patterns are hanging in the same factory as somebody else's patterns. And also culturally, the way we are as a people, we are talkers. And trust is a huge issue. You could have everything at your fingertips and at the end of the day there's no facility that I can go to get my stuff made, so I end up sourcing abroad, or I end up doing something abroad. I'm not saying me alone specifically, but you end up doing things abroad and you're getting harassed for it or bashed for it because you're not locally produced, like this is some horrific thing.

I don't have a problem if something is locally produced or not. You do what you can do with the resources you have. And if I can get it done, not necessarily cheaper, but more cost effective, better quality and save time, I'm not going to beat up and harass myself about a Trinidadian didn't make it, if I can get it done. I mean but my target market is not necessarily Trinidadian, so for me it's a little different. What are you going to focus on, do you want your brand to be an international brand or are you more concerned about a Trinidadian manufacturing your clothes. And that can slow you down a lot because culturally the work ethic, and the persistence and the drive and whatever is not on par with the international standard.

GF: Do you think it's cultural?

AV: It is cultural. We're a lazy culture. We live on the equator. The sun is shining, carnival is coming. There's a lime, there's a Carib after work lime. I'm having wine one o'clock in the afternoon. I'm just saying it's a cultural thing that being lackadaisical is in our nature. I'm not saying that we are not driven, there are very very driven people here, but enough to make an industry? I can be driven as a designer, Adrian Foster is driven as a designer but at some point it's bigger than you. You need other people.

And in a way, this then moves on to why, why does Meiling, always work with the same people when she's doing a production? Why does anybody work with the same people? And then people are like, it's not fair they don't give us a chance. Well if I found something that works, and if I found people that I can work with and it's on time and they're there and they're productive, why would I look for anybody else? Because it's so hard to find consistently productive people who answer emails on time, and calls on time, that when I found - hey come! Come! Be on my team. That's why you say the same people working in the same circles at the same time and while it may seem unfair there's a reason behind it. Because I would rather know that this formula works and go to them first than try somebody new and end up falling flat on my face or being out of pocket because you couldn't do what I expected of you, on time.

GF: So do you think, focusing on Brand Caribbean, is it jumping the gun? Do you think we don't have the industry to sustain it if we did build a powerful brand, can we deliver?

AV: I don't know enough to really make a definite opinion on it. But like I say, if we get it right it can work very very well. One of the major problems we have within the industry is ego. And I think we really need to break down, everyone needs to break down their ego to be able to work together. There are people who are in the industry

who really just want their slice of the pie and they're really not concerned with anyone else. There are people who want the whole pie and they're not concerned with anyone else.

Once we break down the ego and start working together and there are a group of designers who do work together. I call them the second movement, Christopher Nathan calls them the middle level designers. I would be a mid-level designer. Because you have at the top your Meiling, Claudia, Peter Elias, the veterans who have been doing this for thirty forty years. They sort of set the stage for us, they're the pioneers for this. And all kudos and respect to them for what they've done so far. It's a small group of maybe six or eight designers – Robert Young, Claudia Pegus and Heather Jones. They've done what they've done and it's time for them to pass the baton. Now you have those designers who are willing to pass the baton, they take on their interns they share their knowledge. Then you have those who still trying to hold on with everything they have. They don't really like the new comers who are coming up and they don't want to share that info, which is a shame because there's a lot to be shared.

Then you have your UTTT grads who are a fantastic amazing set of talent coming out of UTT. And then you have those mid-level designer, those who did not study at UTT who have their own skills, like myself, Christian Boucaud, Shaun Griffith Perez, so we're another set. So there's these three sets of designers and everybody uses the resources they have. The veterans have built a name for themselves, they have their people. The UTT grads are privy to a certain set of resources that for example I would not be privy to, their incubator or their facilities or whatever. So everybody has their advantages and everybody has something that they need. And that's why I think if we could all just like forget this whole midlevel, bottom level bullshit and just start sharing info, then it would be great.

GF: Well what would you need to be able to build this sort of a wider network? What would you need – government intervention? Is that what Creative TT was meant to be?

AV: The government is a problem, because even they have their own agenda.

GF: Well do you need it to be industry led, what would need to happen?

I would say I see it on a smaller level now in terms of collaborations between designers. For example, Lush Kingdom is a group of people from UTT, who are working together because they saw it more beneficial for them to work together to create. One is in charge of design, one is in charge of this, and they have made their small little unit. Those little collaborations, funnily enough the brands that do that are the brands that are getting the most traction now.

You get these designers who forget about ego and forget about the crap, you can quote me on crap. There are also friendships that have been made and it's really support for one another. People like that, finding ways and opportunities to help each other, like this opportunity may not be good for me but it's still an opportunity, so let me find somebody to share this with. Then you build a bond, you build a friendship, which comes back to your previous question, you build a network and everybody sort of opens up their world to other people.

GF: Lovely. Ok that's pretty much all my questions unless there is something else you want to say.

AV: No. Not really, I'm sure someone is going to lynch me for something I said [laughs]

GF: No [laughs].

Appendix I: Sample consent form

1.	I have read and understood the information about the project, as provided by the researcher - Gabrielle Ferdinand.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my participation.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	I voluntarily agree to participate in the project.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	I understand I can withdraw at any time without giving reasons and that I will not be penalised for withdrawing nor will I be questioned about why I have withdrawn.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained (e.g. use of names, pseudonyms, anonymisation of data, etc.) to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	If applicable, separate terms of consent for interviews, audio, video or other forms of data collection have been explained and provided to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	The use of the data in research, publications, sharing and archiving has been explained to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.	I understand that the researcher's academic supervisors will have access to this data and that they have agreed to preserve the confidentiality of the data.	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.	Select only one of the following:	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I would like my name used and understand what I have said or written as part of this study will be used in reports, publications and other research outputs so that anything I have contributed to this project can be recognised. 	<input type="checkbox"/>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I do not want my name used in this project. 	
10.	I, along with the Researcher, agree to sign and date this informed consent form.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Participant:

Name of Participant Signature Date

Researcher:

Name of Researcher Signature Date

Appendix J: Excerpts from the Jamaica Tourist Board's 'Brand Jamaica Brand Manual'

Excerpt A: The brand manifesto

**OUR CAMPAIGN
MANIFESTO**

Below is our campaign manifesto which sets the tone for everything that follows.

There's nothing in the world that can make you more optimistic, more at peace and more alive than strolling down a beach in JAMAICA®.

Between the spirit of the people, the aroma from the jerk shacks, the sound of the reggae and the vision of green hills peering down on blue water—you're lifted to a place you never dreamed possible.

That feeling is what JAMAICA creates.
We pump it out every second of every day.
It comes naturally to us. It's who we are.

That feeling that all is right in the world.
And not a single place in the world does it better.

So come to JAMAICA.
And get all right.

Source: Jamaica Tourist Board, 2013, p.6

Excerpt B: The Jamaica Brandmark Guidelines

JAMAICA®
BRAND AND CAMPAIGN
STYLE GUIDE
ISSUE DATE 11 | 2013

**CORRECT USE
OF THE BRANDMARK**

JAMAICA® brandmark is instantly recognizable around the world. As a result, it is very flexible and can be used in many different sizes and colors.

JAMAICA®

JAMAICA®

JAMAICA®

JAMAICA®

JAMAICA®

JAMAICA®

The preferred and most impactful way to use our brandmark is in color as illustrated above. However, when color isn't an option, our brandmark can be used in positive black or reversed out of black.



JAMAICA®

Source: Jamaica Tourist Board, 2013, p.11

Excerpt C: Guidelines for the use of illustrations

JAMAICA®
BRAND AND CAMPAIGN
STYLE GUIDE
ISSUE DATE 11 | 2013

ILLUSTRATIONS/
ICONS SUMMARY

Below is a library of icons that may be used throughout our communication materials and campaign.

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Source: Jamaica Tourist Board, 2013, p.17

Excerpt D: A Sample Advertisement

JAMAICA®
BRAND AND CAMPAIGN
STYLE GUIDE
ISSUE DATE 11 | 2013

Print Ad Activities/Beach

Illustrated here is a print
ad showcasing JAMAICA's
pristine beaches.

HOW THE ASSETS WORK TOGETHER

Our campaign is comprised of a number
of branding elements. The example below
illustrates the five essential assets that
make up our campaign.



* Headlines are FPO

Source: Jamaica Tourist Board, 2013, p. 32

Appendix K: Table of contents from ‘Carnival Trinidad and Tobago Style: The Blueprint’

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Source: Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism, Trinidad and Tobago, 2014, p. ii